

THE ARGOSY.

FEBRUARY, 1894.

THE GREY MONK.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE MYSTERIES OF HERON DYKE"

CHAPTER V.

AT ONE FELL BLOW.

WE are under other skies and the time is again two years later.
"Alec Clare, by all that's wonderful!"

The exclamation came from one of two men who, happening to be bent on getting into a street car at the same moment, found themselves unexpectedly face to face. It was followed next moment by a hearty hand-grip, and then the long-parted acquaintances—friends, in the best sense of the word, they could hardly have been termed—sat down side by side.

It was at Pineapple City, a thriving and intensely go-ahead township on the borders of Lake Michigan, that the meeting just recorded took place.

Denis Boyd and Alec Clare had been intimate at college, without being exactly chums. Their fathers had been friends of long standing, and it seemed only natural to the two young men that they should copy their sires' example. Boyd had read far more assiduously than the heir of Withington Chase had ever cared to do: his father was far from being a rich man and he was anxious about his degree. Their college career had come to an end at the same time, they had gone down together and had parted with mutual good wishes and an implied promise to meet again in town later on, since which time till now they had not set eyes on each other.

"And now tell me what fortune, good or bad, has landed you in this out-of-the-way spot," began Boyd. "Of course I assume that, like myself, you are merely a bird of passage."

"On the contrary, this place is my home. I am engaged in business here."

Denis Boyd gave vent to a low whistle.

"Strange how things turn out, is it not?" continued Alec. "But before I add to your surprise, suppose you make your own confession, and tell me how it comes to pass that you happen to be here."

Boyd laughed. "My confession—to accept your own term—will be of the briefest and baldest. You may, or may not, remember that I was destined for the Law, but shortly after you and I parted my father came to grief over a bank failure, and I was compelled to look out for some immediate means of earning a living. A situation in a commercial house in Liverpool offered itself, which I gladly accepted, and there I have been ever since, working my way up by slow but sure degrees. I am over in the States on a matter of business for my firm, which admits of my combining a little holiday-making with it. I reached here late last evening, got through my business a couple of hours ago, and am killing time while waiting to be picked up by a train going East in exactly half an hour and five minutes from now. But here we are at the depot. Won't you alight and keep me company for my remaining thirty-five minutes? My portmanteau is in the cloak-room, or whatever they call the place in this part of the world."

Accordingly they alighted and proceeded to stroll up and down the station platform.

While the other had been talking, Alec had had time to pull himself together and to decide how far he should, or should not, take Boyd into his confidence. For various reasons he would much have preferred not meeting him, but that was beyond help now; and, after all, Boyd was a gentleman and the least hint would suffice to seal his lips.

"I suppose," began Alec, with a little laugh, "that I am not the first fellow by many who has contrived to find himself at odds with his father, or whose father thought he had just cause to find fault with the error of his ways; at any rate, the pater and I came to the conclusion that we should be better apart for at least a few years to come. For a time I wandered about the Continent, leading a free-and-easy Bohemian sort of life. At length I grew tired of doing nothing, and having had a certain amount of capital placed at my command, which I was desirous of tripling, or quadrupling, as the case might be, I determined to try my fortune in the States. That was two years ago. The result, considering my utter lack of business knowledge, was only what might have been expected. I gained a certain amount of experience, it is true, but it was at the expense of half my capital. I was disheartened, but by no means despairing. Leaving the scene of my ill fortune, I came West. I had no particular object in halting even for an hour at Pineapple City, beyond being tired with a long railway journey and intolerably bored by a fellow traveller who persisted in clinging to me like a leech, and whom I was determined to get rid of at any cost. Well, I had not been here many hours

before I made the acquaintance of an Englishman of the name of Travis, a gentleman by birth and education, who, like yourself, had lighted on evil days, and had been lured all this way from home in the hope of being able to make a living, and ultimately, perhaps, a competence. The profession he had set up in was that of a breeder and trainer of horses for riding and carriage purposes. It was a business which he believed to be capable of considerable extension, and, just then, he was looking out for a partner who was prepared to invest a certain number of dollars in the concern. The opportunity seemed to me one which I should have been foolish to let pass me, more especially as I happen to know something about horseflesh; and, not to bore you with details, I will merely add that, after due investigation, I became Frank Travis's partner. That happened two months ago."

"From what you have just told me," said Boyd, "I conclude that you have no present intention of returning to England."

"None whatever," answered Alec drily.

"And have you never regretted your self-imposed expatriation?"

Alec shook his head. "So far I have had no cause whatever for doing so."

At this juncture they were all but run down by a man who was coming full tilt out of the refreshment buffet. "Ah, Mr. Alexander, glad to see you," he exclaimed. "Have only time to say that the pair of chestnuts you and your partner sold me a fortnight ago have turned out perfect rippers—yes, sir, rippers. My wife—ah-ha!—hasn't once been out of temper with me since I bought 'em. Bye-bye." And with that he was gone.

Denis Boyd looked at Alec, and the latter read a certain question in his eyes.

"When I came out to the States I chose to drop my surname. I am known to everybody here simply as John Alexander," he said quietly. "And look here, Boyd," he added, "I shall be glad if, when you get back home, you will make no mention of having met me. I have certain reasons for asking this of you."

"My dear fellow, not a word more is needed," replied the other heartily. "You may rely upon my silence."

A minute or two before, Boyd had been on the point of asking Alec whether he was still a bachelor, but it now seemed to him that such a question might savour, if not exactly of impertinence, yet of a desire to pry into a matter which was really no concern of his. It was evident there were incidents in his friend's career which he did not wish to have touched on. He would leave his question unasked.

A few minutes later Boyd's train steamed into the station.

After having parted from his friend, Alec was tempted by the fineness of the evening to go for a solitary ramble into the outskirts of the town, which, in one direction, could almost claim to be termed picturesque. His encounter with Boyd had served to awaken in him

thoughts and memories which had long been dormant, but which now for a little while claimed him as their own with a persistency that would not be denied. It was not so much the scenes of his college life that his meeting with Boyd had recalled to visionary existence, but still earlier scenes connected with his life at the Chase. Once more he was a boy by his mother's side, and felt her caressing hand smooth down his ruffled curls; once more he was pacing the dusky coverts with Martin Rigg, flushing now a covey of young partridges, and now some crusty old pheasant that evidently resented being disturbed; or else he was galloping through the park at a break-neck pace on his shaggy Shetland pony. And then, like some grim spectre, the image of his father came gliding in, and all the happy pictures vanished, as when the dark slide of a magic lantern is suddenly shut down.

He came back to the present and its more immediate interests with a sigh.

There were several circumstances in his life since they had last met, of which he had hinted nothing to Boyd, and he was grateful to his friend for having forborne to question him more closely, as many men in like circumstances would not have failed to do.

For instance; he, Alec, had breathed no syllable having reference to his marriage. That, indeed, was with him a subject about which he could bear to speak to no one, for long before this he had discovered, to his bitter cost, that his marriage was a failure, and that in asking Giovanna Rispani to become his wife he had committed one of the greatest mistakes which it is possible for a man to make. He and his wife had scarcely an interest in common. Giovanna had never really cared for him, but had married him for the sake of his money. To her limited experience, six thousand pounds had represented unbounded riches; for her it meant travel, and fine clothes, and sojourning at big hotels in such cities as Milan, or Paris, or London.

Bitter, very bitter was her disappointment when, after their arrival in America, her husband took up his abode in a third-rate town in one of the Eastern States, where he conceived that there was an opening for the profitable investment of a portion of his capital. At that time his dream was to make a fortune, whereas he had only succeeded in losing his money, and in helping to build up the fortunes of others. All Giovanna's foolish dreams had vanished like a wreath of mist at sunrise, and intensely did she resent the fact. There was nothing of the scold about her, nor had she any of those pettish, irritating ways, by means of which so many women make their discontent with their surroundings felt. She was a cold, proud, silent, disappointed woman, who withdrew into herself, and who manifested not the slightest interest in her husband, or any of his concerns. She hated the country to which he had brought her; the climate was atrocious; the people among whom she dwelt, and all their ways, were antipathetic to her; she grew homesick and pined

for her own country and her own people. One child had been born of the marriage.

When Alec went West in further search of that fortune which seemed so chary of smiling on him, he left his wife and child behind. At that time he had still a little over two thousand pounds remaining of the six thousand he had received from Mr. Page. This balance had lately been reduced by the sum of fifteen hundred pounds, that being the price he had paid for the privilege of entering into partnership with Mr. Frank Travis.

Good fellow as the latter was, and much as he esteemed him, not even to him had Alec confided the fact that he was a married man. It was not that he had the slightest wish to make a secret of it, but simply from an innate disinclination to speak of his private affairs to any one. Once each week he wrote to Giovanna. In view of the relations now existing between them, he was not weak enough to encumber his letters with any superfluous terms of endearment, which would merely have caused her lip to curl with quiet scorn; his epistles were rather such as a sober business-like brother might have penned to an equally sober and business-like sister. He had kept her informed as to the progress of his negotiations with Travis, and when the matter between them was concluded he did not fail to tell her at what cost the partnership had been secured by him.

All this time he had been living at a boarding-house, but now that his business matters were finally arranged there was no reason why he should not at once look out for a permanent home to which he could remove his wife and child.

In the last letter he had written to Giovanna he had told her that he hoped another month at most would see them together again, by which time the house he had in his mind's eye, a newly built one, would be finished and ready for occupation. In his stroll this evening his footsteps naturally gravitated in the direction of the house in question. His choice of it had in part been determined by reason of its somewhat romantic situation. It was built on a considerable elevation, and from it the eye ranged over a wide extent of wooded undulating country, rising here and there into rocky eminences which owed everything to Nature and nothing to art. A flash of silver on the horizon revealed that the waters of Lake Michigan were no great distance away.

To the eyes of Alec there was something in this landscape that was almost Italian in character, and he flattered himself with the fancy that perchance it would please Giovanna and that she might find in it a charm that would serve in some measure to lessen her regrets for the country he had brought her from.

After he had reached the house and had ascertained what progress the workmen had made since his last visit, and had settled in his mind after what fashion he would like the garden and shrubbery laid out, he sauntered back towards the town. At the boarding-house he found his partner awaiting him. A business telegram had arrived in

the course of the afternoon which necessitated that one or the other of them should set out next morning for Milwaukee, on the opposite shore of the lake. After talking matters over, it was decided that Alec should be the one to undertake the journey. It was now Tuesday, and the probability was that he would be back by Saturday evening at the latest.

Next forenoon Travis drove his partner as far as the steamboat wharf at Davisville and there shook hands with him and bade him good-bye. They had no prevision of what the next few days would bring forth.

As it fell out, Alec's business detained him longer than he had thought it would, necessitating, among other things, an up-country journey of two score miles to a place where no railway had yet penetrated. It was not till a late hour on Monday afternoon that he got back to the hotel at Milwaukee, where he had secured a room on his arrival there the previous Wednesday.

"A letter for you, Mr. Alexander," said the hotel clerk to him as he was passing through the hall. "Been here since Saturday."

As Alec took the letter he saw that the address was in his partner's writing. Anticipating nothing of greater moment than an ordinary business communication, he lingered to glance over the latest batch of telegrams, and proceeded leisurely to his own room before opening the envelope. But all his *sang-froid* vanished the moment his eye lighted on the contents, and in its stead a deadly fear gripped him by the heart. There were two enclosures, one a brief hurried scrawl from Travis, the other a black-edged missive from his wife. Of what fatal news was this last the messenger? Could it be that his child was dead? or—or was it merely that Vanna had had news from home of the death of some one there? It was the former dire possibility that had smitten him with an unspeakable dread.

He steadied himself sufficiently to read what his partner had to tell him before breaking the black-edged envelope.

"Dear Alexander" (wrote Travis), "the enclosed was brought here by a boarding-house messenger a few minutes ago. As it may be of importance that it should reach you with the least possible delay, and as you have wired me not to expect you back before Tuesday, I mail it on at once.

"Sincerely yours,

"FRANK TRAVIS."

Then he tore open his wife's letter.

A single devouring glance at the first half dozen lines was enough. His child was dead!

He could read no further then. The lines danced and quivered before his eyes. The letter fluttered from his fingers. For a moment or two every drop of blood seemed drawn from his heart. He caught at a chair and sank into it. He was as one smitten by

a blow from an invisible hand. The love his wife had repudiated and would have none of, had been lavished by him, secretly and undemonstratively, on his child. His affection for it had been of that deep intense kind which neither seeks nor finds for itself an adequate outlet in words. And now he was bereft of the one object that had made life still sweet to him, and henceforward naught was left him save the dust and ashes of existence!

Afternoon had darkened into evening, and night had come before he roused himself sufficiently to pick up his wife's letter and read it through to the end. By that time a lighted lamp had been brought him.

He now noticed for the first time that the letter bore a date a week old, but just then he could no more than vaguely wonder why and how it had been delayed. Giovanna had always been in the habit of beginning her epistles to her husband without troubling herself to employ any of those preliminary terms of affection or politeness which most writers make use of, and her present one was no exception to the rule.

"It has become my most painful task" (she began) "to have to inform you that our child died in the course of Friday night last, after only a few hours' illness. Everything was done for it that could be done, but in vain. The doctor whom I had summoned was present when the end came. The funeral took place to-day, Monday. I enclose you the certificate of burial.

"It seemed to me that it would have been useless, as well as foolish, to bring you upwards of seven hundred miles merely in order that you might be present at the interment. All was over. Your presence could have availed nothing.

"With the death of my babe the strongest link in the chain which bound me to you, is broken. Had it lived I should not have taken the step I have now determined upon: which is, to at once go back to my own home, in my own country—which I ought never to have left.

"Both you and I have long been aware of the terrible mistake we made in taking upon ourselves the obligations of matrimony. It is not too late, however (or so I think and believe), to undo in some measure at least the folly of which we were mutually guilty. There is one way, and one only, by means of which this can be effected. It is for us to separate—it is for you to go your way, and I to go mine—and to be virtually dead to each other henceforward and for ever.

"I shall leave this place three hours hence on my way to New York, whence I shall take the steamer for Europe, but whether I shall proceed direct to Italy, or whether I shall first visit my mother's relatives in England, I have not yet decided. In any case, it would be useless for you to follow me. My mind is fully made up, and nothing would induce me to return to you.

"When you left this place three months ago you put into my hands

a number of blank signed cheques which I was to fill up at my own discretion for whatever sums I might find myself in need of while you were away. By means of one of the cheques in question I have drawn out the remaining balance standing to your credit in the bank, amounting to a trifle over five hundred pounds. You are not the man to begrudge me this sum, I am sure, for you were ever generosity itself towards me.

"And now I have nothing more to add, except to bid you farewell, and to ask you to believe that you have, in all sincerity, the best wishes for your future happiness and prosperity of one who regrets that she cannot love you as such a man as you deserves to be loved.

"GIOVANNA.

"P.S. I have arranged for this letter not to be posted till a week after my departure, so that by the time you read these lines I shall be half-way on my road to Europe."

Alas, poor Alec! Wife and child lost to him at one fell blow! As regarded the latter, he could but bow his head in all humility, as it behoves all of us to do when our turn comes to be smitten, and breathe the words: "Thy will be done." But Vanna? Oh, the callousness, the cruelty that breathed through almost every line of her letter! He had wept for the loss of his child, and it had been an infinite relief to him to do so—but his eyes were dry now; he had no tears left for her. It seemed rather as if her desertion of him served, during those first bitter hours, to kindle in his heart a dull smouldering fire of resentment, which was none the less intense in that it betrayed nothing of itself on the surface. Go after her, indeed!—try, with endearments and protestations, to induce her to return! Not a single step would he stir in pursuit. He and she had done with each other for ever.

The miserable hours trod slowly in the footsteps of each other, and the night wore itself away somehow. He never undressed, or went to bed, but about daybreak he flung himself on a couch, where he sank into a half slumber which lasted till the people of the house were astir and the world had woke up to another day.

He was glad when ten o'clock had come, at which hour he set foot on board *The Prairie Belle* on his way back to Pineapple City.

CHAPTER VI.

ALEC'S FATE.

DENIS BOYD did not forget the promise he had given Alec Clare not to mention his encounter with the latter after his return to England. It did not, however, seem to him that there was any necessity to include his father in the embargo thus laid on his

tongue. Accordingly when, a little later, Colonel Boyd went on a visit to his son, the latter, knowing that his father and Sir Gilbert were acquaintances of many years' standing, mentioned, as one of the minor incidents of his recent visit to the States, his meeting with young Clare, without any thought that the Colonel might have occasion to deem it worth his while to mention the circumstance again. As it fell out, however, a few weeks later, Colonel Boyd and Sir Gilbert found themselves together in the reading-room of the London club of which both were members. They had not met for some time, for of late years the baronet's visits to the metropolis had become few and far between. They greeted each other heartily, and agreed to lunch together.

In the course of the meal the Colonel said: "By the way, Clare, my lad and yours stumbled across each other quite by accident a little while ago in the States, where Denny had been sent on a matter of business for his firm."

"Ah, indeed," remarked the baronet as he set down the glass of wine he had been in the act of raising to his lips. "And how was Alec?"

"First-rate, for anything I was told to the contrary. They had only a very short time together, as I understood, and seeing that they were chums at college, they would have plenty of subjects to talk about."

"No doubt—no doubt. By-the-bye, did your boy say whereabouts in the States it was—in New York, or Boston, or Chicago—that he came across Alec?"

"Oh, it was in some quite outlandish place I believe; but I did not trouble to remember the name."

"I am rather anxious to ascertain Alec's address, and for this reason: his godmother, Mrs. Fleming, died lately and left him a legacy of two thousand pounds. The executors, being anxious to wind up the estate, have applied to me for his address, which I am unable to furnish them with. You see, Alec kicked over the traces pretty considerably some time ago, and he and I parted in a huff, since which he has not condescended to keep me *au courant* of his movements. Now, if your boy can supply me with his address, it will get me out of my difficulty with Mrs. Fleming's executors."

"I have no doubt Denny can furnish you with what you want. I will write to him by to-night's post, and advise you of the result the moment I hear from him."

Denis Boyd, in view of his promise to Alec Clare, could not help feeling annoyed at the turn the affair had taken; and yet, as he put it to himself, what harm could come of his furnishing Sir Gilbert with the information he asked for? Apparently the only purpose for which the baronet required his son's address was that he might thereby be enabled to inform him that a certain legacy was awaiting his instructions. Really, when he, Boyd, came to think of it, Alec

ought to be very grateful to him, and doubtless would be were he made aware of the circumstances, for having had it in his power to do him such a capital turn.

His brief note to his father was to the effect that young Clare, who passed in the States under the name of "John Alexander," was at the time the writer met him, residing at Pineapple City, a town on the borders of Lake Michigan, in the State of the same name; and, further, that he was engaged in business there, his partner being an Englishman of the name of Travis.

This note was at once forwarded by Colonel Boyd to Sir Gilbert, who lost no time in taking it in person to Mr. Page.

As it happened, the lawyer about that time had occasion to send a confidential member of his staff to America, to make certain inquiries in the interests of one of his clients; so it was decided that, instead of trusting to the chances of a letter reaching Alec through the medium of the post, the clerk in question, Winch by name, should proceed as far as Pineapple City, seek out "Mr. John Alexander," and deliver into his hands the communication which would be entrusted to him for that purpose.

The letter referred to was written by Mr. Page, and was read and approved of by Sir Gilbert before being sealed up. It was nothing more than a briefly worded intimation to the effect that two thousand pounds, being the amount of the late Mrs. Fleming's legacy to her godson, was awaiting his disposal in the hands of the executors at such and such an address. But the baronet had no knowledge of the little private note from the same pen which the lawyer contrived to smuggle into the envelope. In it he reproached Alec for having allowed so long a time to pass without communicating with him, begging him at once to repair the omission, and assuring him that in the writer he had a friend who might always be relied upon to keep a watchful eye over his interests.

Mr. Winch started on his long journey in due course. He would attend, first of all, to that other business which was taking him across the Atlantic, and then make the best of his way to Pineapple City.

Mr. Winch was an undersized, podgy man, with a round full-moon sort of face and cold fish-like eyes of no hue in particular, to which a pair of spectacles lent a still more vacuous expression. He was clean shaven, always dressed in well-worn black, and, wet or fine, was never seen without a serviceable alpaca umbrella. He had been Mr. Page's confidential clerk for many years, and that gentleman esteemed him highly. Behind that Dutch-clock-like mask of a face was a complex-working brain which delighted in secrets and mysteries, and occasionally went so far as to imagine them where none existed. Although his employer had never told him so—for that was one of the few matters which the lawyer kept to himself—Mr. Winch had not the least doubt in his mind that the John Alexander to whom the letter of which he was the bearer was addressed and the heir of

Withington Chase, who had set out on his travels upwards of four years ago and had never returned, were one and the same person. The name alone had been enough to furnish him with the first hint. He seemed to scent a most delightful mystery. Mr. Winch was jubilant, although, to look at him, nobody would have guessed it.

What, then, must have been his feelings—indeed, it is not too much to say that a tear blurred his spectacles—as on the morning of the twenty-first day after his departure from Liverpool he stood in the telegraph office at Pineapple City and wrote out the following cablegram, addressed to Mr. Page :

“J. A. killed. Steamboat explosion—September 18th. Am returning at once.”

The mystery on which he had counted had all at once collapsed owing to the death of the person chiefly concerned.

It became Mr. Page's unenviable duty, on receipt of the above message, to convey the news to Sir Gilbert. Over what passed between the two on that occasion we need not linger.

On arriving at Liverpool, Mr. Winch telegraphed to his employer by which train he might be expected to reach Mapleford. It was as a consequence of this message that he found Sir Gilbert Clare seated in Mr. Page's private office when, after a preliminary tap at the door, he was bidden to enter.

“Glad to see you back, Winch, and looking so well,” said Mr. Page heartily, as he shook hands with his subordinate. “Of course I know already from your advices the nature of the arrangements you were enabled to make in that matter of Lord Dovercourt, and I congratulate you on your success. Later on we will go through the details one by one. But, sit down. What I want you to do first of all is to furnish me with the whole of the particulars you have been able to obtain confirmatory of the cablegram by which you advised me of the death of Mr. John Alexander.”

Mr. Winch seated himself opposite his employer at the big square writing-table in the centre of the room. Sir Gilbert sat with his back to them and facing the fire. Although he appeared to be immersed in *The Times*, and betrayed no more interest in what followed than any stranger might have done, the reason that had brought him there was perfectly transparent to Mr. Winch, who could not help saying to himself: “Surely to goodness, Mr. Page does not think me such an innocent as not to be able to see through Sir Gilbert's little plot!”

Much of what Mr. Winch had to relate will have already been anticipated by the reader. We need only take up his narrative at the point where Alec Clare, on the morning following the receipt of his wife's letter, stepped on board the *Prairie Belle* at Milwaukee, in the expectation of landing at Davisville about nine o'clock the same evening. But the *Prairie Belle* never reached Davisville. When

about a dozen miles from that place, and soon after nightfall, one of her boilers exploded. The vessel parted amidships, and five minutes later all that was left of her sank in deep water. The accident happened only about half a mile from the shore, and a number of boats at once put out to the rescue of the survivors, of whom a considerable number were picked up, several of them, however, being so badly injured that they afterwards succumbed. Of those saved John Alexander was *not* one. The only inference which could be drawn, was that, either, like many among both passengers and crew, he had been killed outright by the explosion, and that his body had gone down with the ship, or else that, even though, perhaps unhurt, he had sunk before help could reach him from the shore. In any case, alive or dead, nothing was seen or heard of him after the explosion, which had happened just eight weeks prior to Mr. Winch's interview with Mr. Frank Travis.

"I presume," said Mr. Page, "it is a matter of absolute certainty that Mr. Alexander was really on board the ill-fated vessel at the time of the accident."

"That was a question I did not fail to put to Mr. Travis. In reply he told me that among the survivors was a person well acquainted with Mr. Alexander, who had been talking to him only a few minutes before the explosion."

"In that case, I am afraid there is no room left for doubt as to the poor fellow's fate. A sad end, truly, for any one to come to!—I think that will do for the present, Mr. Winch. We will go into other matters later on."

"By-the-way, sir, there is one point which I have not yet mentioned. It is this: When Mr. Alexander, some little time prior to his death, entered into partnership with Mr. Travis, he put the sum of fifteen hundred pounds into the business. That amount Mr. Travis desired me to say that he shall be prepared to refund to Mr. Alexander's heir-at-law after due substantiation of claim and reasonable notice having been given him."

"Hum! very honourable on the part of Mr. Travis. It is a matter, however, as to which there is no immediate hurry, and in regard to which I can take no steps without instructions."

As soon as Mr. Winch had closed the door behind him the baronet faced round.

"It is all true, then!" he exclaimed. "There seems no longer any room for hope."

"None whatever, I am afraid, Sir Gilbert."

"He was my son, Page—my first-born! I cannot forget that Whatever his faults—and they were many—may they lie lightly on his head!"

When, on his return home, the baronet broke the news to his wife, that lady, being a fairly good actress, had no difficulty in giving the needful lugubrious twist to her features, but when she strove to elimi-

nate a tear, she was not so successful. "I am so sorry," she said softly, laying a plump hand for a moment on her husband's shoulder. "Sorry for his sake, poor fellow!—and sorry for yours. But you must strive not to give way, dear. You may rely upon it that it has been ordained for the best." To herself she said: "So, after all, the title as well as the estates will come to Randolph! That is only as it should be. I hate the thought of having to go into mourning, but I suppose there's no help for it."

Poor Lady Clare!

No long time elapsed before a marble tablet was placed *in situ* above the family pew in Withington Church—where there were many more tablets to keep it company—which recorded that it was to the memory of John Alexander Clare, "who was accidentally killed abroad" on such and such a date, "in the twenty-eighth year of his age."

"To think," said Mr. Winch as he one day read the inscription through his spectacles, "that there are only three people in England who know how that poor young man really came by his death, and that I am one of them! But what reason had he for dropping his surname and hiding his identity? Ah! those are mysteries which I'm afraid I shall never now have a chance of fathoming."

By Sir Gilbert's desire, no communication was ever entered into with Mr. Frank Travis. The baronet preferred to sacrifice the fifteen hundred pounds which Alec had invested in the business rather than re-open before the eyes of strangers a chapter of family history which, as he trusted, was now closed for ever.

CHAPTER VII.

TOO LATE.

YEARS nearly a score have come and gone since Mr. Winch brought home the news of the untimely demise of the whilom heir of Withington Chase.

Many have been the changes under the old roof-tree during that time. Sir Gilbert Clare, who is now entering on his seventy-fourth year, is both a widower and childless. Not only is the second Lady Clare dead, but her three sons have followed her to the tomb. Two of them have died of consumption when on the verge of manhood, while the youngest has been accidentally drowned.

Yes, a lonely, childless old man is Sir Gilbert, but still carrying himself bravely before the world, as if in defiance of all the blows a cruel fate has aimed at him, and still retaining a large measure of his old irritability of temper and imperiousness of manner. Would it be too much to wonder whether his heart is ever touched with compunction, or regret, when his eyes chance to rest on a certain tablet above

the family pew—that pew now empty of all but himself—which professes to record the death of his first-born? That, however, is one of those things known to himself alone.

The venue of our story now changes to St. Oswyth's, a town in the Midlands of some twelve to fifteen thousand inhabitants.

It was the fourteenth of May, and Ethel Thursby's nineteenth birthday. Nowhere was there a happier girl than she. Breakfast was just over, and she had come out into the garden to gather a posy of such flowers as were already in bloom for the drawing-room table. Earlier there had been congratulations and presents from her aunts. Miss Matilda had given her "such a love" of a gold watch and chain, while Miss Jane's gift had taken the shape of an inlaid writing-desk filled with stationery stamped with Ethel's monogram, so that really, as she told herself, it was quite a pity her correspondents were so few in number, and that she could not well write to any of them oftener than once a week. Nor had Tamsin forgotten her—dear, rugged, true-hearted Tamsin, who had been her aunt's maid, and hers too for that matter, for more years than she could remember. Ethel's present from her had been a silver thimble, having engraven on its rim the appropriate legend, "A stitch in time saves nine."

While busying herself with the gathering and arrangement of her flowers, Ethel's thoughts were engaged on two very diverse subjects. As she rose from the breakfast-table this morning, her Aunt Matilda had said to her:

"My dear, I and my sister would like to see you in the drawing-room at twelve precisely, when we shall have something of importance to communicate to you."

That the girl should wonder to herself what the "something of importance" could be was but natural.

But just then she had neither time nor inclination to wonder overmuch, her thoughts being almost exclusively taken up by an altogether different matter. The communication which *she* hoped to be able to make to her aunts a few hours hence, far outweighed, in her estimation, anything they could possibly have to say to her. For had not Launce promised that to-day, on her birthday, to wit, he would take off the embargo of silence he had imposed upon her, and give her leave to inform her aunts of their engagement? It was a secret which had weighed upon her ever since, in response to his persistent entreaties, she had yielded a reluctant consent to an arrangement so totally opposed to her feelings and modes of thought. No one but herself could tell how happy she should feel when it was a secret no longer.

The Miss Thursbys had come to reside at St. Oswyth's when Ethel was about two years old. She was an orphan, and who, if

not they, should take charge of the parentless girl and bring her up as their own? Even then they were spinsters of mature age, but beyond silvering their hair in some measure, the intervening years had changed them scarcely at all. They belonged to that happy class of persons, with equable tempers, untroubled by dyspepsia and uncorroded by pessimism, whom Time loves to touch with the gentlest of fingers. He does not overlook them entirely, but the furrows he traces on their placid brows are few and far between. And so they go on for years, growing older by gradations so gentle as to be scarcely perceptible; for, say as we will, the old scytheman has his favourites.

The sisters, on coming to St. Oswyth's, had bought Vale View House—a substantial modern-built mansion, standing in its own pleasant grounds, but a world too big for the requirements of their unpretentious establishment. That, however, was nobody's business but their own.

There they had settled down, and there, in "quiet innocence," it was their hope to spend the remaining term of their lives.

They had a joint income, derivable in part from property left them by their father, and in part by their brother, of about eight hundred pounds a year. In addition to their faithful Tamsin, they kept a couple of maid-servants, a cook, a youth in buttons, and a man who combined the duties of gardener with those of groom to Flossie, the pony driven by them in their pretty little basket-carriage. They came of a Quaker stock, but their father had seceded when they were quite young. They still, however, retained much of the traditional simplicity of dress and demeanour of their progenitors and "thee'd" and "thou'd" each other when they were alone, but rarely, or never, when in the company of others.

Be it known, further, that Miss Matilda and Miss Jane were twins, they having been born within half-an-hour of each other.

Owing, however, to some stupid mismanagement on the part of the nurse, they had got "mixed," so to speak, when only a few hours old, and it was not positively known which of them was the elder.

In this embarrassing state of affairs they had long ago—that is to say, from the date of their commencing to keep house together—come to a mutual arrangement by which they agreed to take it in turns, month and month about, to enact the part of elder sister, during which time the other deferred to her in every way, only, in her turn, to occupy the superior position and be deferred to throughout the following month.

It was an arrangement well understood among the circle of their friends and acquaintance, but, in order that there should be no mistake in the matter, each in turn, during the month she filled the rôle of elder sister, wore round her neck, by way of distinguishing token, an old-fashioned gold chain from which was suspended an equally old-fashioned locket, which, when open, displayed on one side a miniature of their mother, and on the other a lock of their father's hair.

Thus it came to pass that whenever people visited at Vale View House, or whenever they were called upon by the sisters, they would nudge each other and whisper, "This is Miss Matilda's month," or Miss Jane's, according to which of them was wearing the chain and locket; and to that one they would have been considered by the sisters as lacking in good manners, had they failed to address her as "*Miss Thursby*," or to treat her with an added shade of deference as representing for the time being the head of the family.

By every one who knew them, both rich and poor (and to numbers of poor people they were very well known indeed) the ladies of Vale View were beloved and respected; although it might be that there were not wanting some would-be "superior" persons who smiled to themselves at certain old-fashioned ways and quaint simplicities of speech and manner which they were quite incapable of appreciating. But such people are to be met with everywhere. It was Mrs. Trippington-Fynes, a new-comer at St. Oswyth's, and regarded as quite an acquisition to the somewhat restricted circle of society in the little town, who, after having been introduced to the Misses Thursby and chatted with them awhile, remarked to Mrs. Sandilands, wife of the popular squire of that name:

"Do you know, my dear, I find them quite too deliciously archaic."

It was a phrase that was repeated and taken up, and for many a day afterwards the sisters were spoken of by one person or another as being "quite too deliciously archaic, don't you know?"

But we have left Ethel all this time alone in the garden.

Following her with our eyes, while she pursues her dainty occupation, what do we see? A slender supple figure of medium height, every movement of which betrays an easy unstudied grace with which training has evidently had nothing to do. A small head crowned with plaits and coils of glossy dark brown hair; eyes, too, of a brown so dark that unless you are privileged to gaze into them by sunlight, you would be almost ready to wager that they are absolutely black; large and luminous, with here and there a tiny fleck of ruddy light, they respond instantaneously to every fluctuating emotion of the loving, brave, reverent soul which looks out at you through them. The face, with its candid brow, its rather short straight nose and the soft curves of its chin, has the ineffable charm of purity, of equable pulses, of slow-breathing health both of mind and body; the whole expression is one of sweet, grave steadfastness.

To connect Ethel Thursby in one's thoughts with such feminine weaknesses as a fit of hysterics, or an attack of "nerves," would seem as preposterous as to assume that the man in the moon is afflicted after a similar fashion. This morning she is wearing a lavender-coloured frock of some soft clinging stuff which displays to perfection the charming contours of her figure. Her collar and cuffs are of lace, woven by a crippled girl in a neighbouring village, whom Ethel counts as one among the number of her humble friends.

The sound of footsteps on the gravel of the carriage drive breaks up her reverie. She turns to behold Everard Lisle, and, as she does so, a smile of welcome illumines her face.

The young man in question was the son of the vicar of the parish church of St. Oswyth's, and had been intended for the medical profession, for which he had displayed much natural aptitude; but an illness, the result of overwork while a student in Paris, had left him with weakened eyesight.

Having been ordered to give up his studies for a long time to come, and to confine himself to some out-door occupation, he had chosen to become the pupil and, later on, the assistant to an architect and land surveyor in St. Oswyth's; and so much did his new profession prove to his liking, and so well did it agree with his health, that at length he definitively decided to discard the one for which he had originally been intended.

Everard's father, the Rev. Harold Lisle, and Sir Gilbert Clare—at that time simply Mr. Clare—had been contemporaries at college, but strangers to each other previously to a certain afternoon, when it had been the good fortune of the former to save the life of the latter, who had been seized with cramp while bathing.

From that time they had never quite lost touch of each other, so that when Sir Gilbert, who always felt that he owed a debt of gratitude to his preserver, became in want of some one to fill the double post of amanuensis to himself—his eyesight having failed him considerably of late—and assistant to his land-steward, Mr. Kinaby, whose health was breaking up, he wrote to the Rev. Harold, offering the position in question to his son, of whose affairs he had some knowledge, by whom it was gladly accepted. Everard Lisle, who had now been a couple of months at Withington Chase, had come over to St. Oswyth's to-day for a special purpose, the nature of which will presently appear.

He had known Ethel Thursby for years, and had loved her as long as he had known her.

They had met frequently, sometimes at his own home, for now and then the ladies from Vale View took tea with his mother, and sometimes in general society. When he had first known her she had been still a schoolgirl, and he had told himself that he could afford to wait till she should be of an age to listen to what he had to say to her.

Then had come the break in his prospects consequent on his illness, after which he had had to begin the world afresh. Knowing that he would have to rely solely upon his own exertions—for his father's living was far from being a lucrative one and there were several fledgelings still under the parental roof—and that some years must necessarily elapse before he would be able to marry, with rare self-abnegation he determined neither by word nor sign to betray his love to the object of it till he should have some assured

prospect of being able to ask her to share with him such a home as she was entitled to expect. To that prospect he had at length attained, and he was here to-day with the determination to tell her all that he had carefully hidden in his heart for so long a time. But delays are dangerous in love, as in so many other of the affairs of life, as Everard was presently destined to find to his cost. He was a well set-up resolute-looking young fellow, clear-eyed and clear-skinned, and groomed to perfection; in brief, as far as appearance was concerned, a typical young Briton of the latter half of the nineteenth century.

He was making directly for the house, but the moment he caught sight of Ethel his face flushed, a sudden sparkle leapt to his eyes, and he at once turned and made across the lawn towards her. In one hand he was carrying a bouquet of choice orchids covered up in tissue paper.

Ethel, seeing him thus unexpectedly, supposed, naturally enough, that he had come to spend a brief holiday at home, not troubling herself to remember that only a couple of months had gone by since he had taken up the duties of his new position.

"This *is* a surprise," she said smilingly as she gave him her hand. "I quite thought you were a hundred miles away at the least. That's about the distance, is it not, to—to—I forget its name—the place where you are now living?"

They turned together and strolled slowly along.

"That is about the distance," he smilingly replied. "Duty ought, perhaps, to have kept me at Withington Chase, but inclination has brought me to St. Oswyth's. I did not forget that this is your birthday, Miss Ethel; as a proof of which I venture to offer you these few flowers. Will you deign to accept them with the giver's best wishes for your health and happiness." As he spoke he stripped the paper off the bouquet and offered it for Ethel's acceptance.

She took it without a shadow of hesitation, first coming to a stand and placing on the lawn the basket in which she had been gathering her own flowers. "Oh, how lovely—how exquisitely lovely!" she exclaimed with unfeigned admiration. Flowers such as those were a revelation to her. "It was very very kind of you, Mr. Lisle, to remember my birthday in such a charming fashion. My aunts will be as delighted as I am. Of course you will come in and see them now that you are here."

Even now there was no dawn of suspicion in her heart as to the real purport of his visit. Everard's courage sank a little, but he had come all the way from the Chase to seek his opportunity, and now that he had found it he was not the man to let it slip through his fingers.

"One moment, if you please," he pleaded. "There is something that I wish particularly to say to you."

"Yes?" she said interrogatively, turning her gaze full upon him, with the slightest inflection of surprise in her voice.

Then, all at once, she saw that in his eyes which revealed to her what it was he was about to say to her, and before the clear intense flame of love which glowed in their depths, her own eyes sank abashed and dismayed. To her it came, indeed, as a revelation. For a moment or two all the pulses of her being seemed to stand still. She said to herself, "I am dreaming—presently I shall awake." Everard took her hand and she did not know it. From her unresisting fingers he withdrew the bouquet and placed it on the basket at her feet. It was only when he began to speak that she came to herself. Between the spot where they were standing and the house a large clump of evergreens intervened. From none of the windows could they be overlooked.

Everard, reading in her face some portion of that which was passing through her mind, gave her a few moments in which to recover herself, before saying more. Then, not without misgivings, he resumed :

"It was more, far more, than merely to congratulate you on your birthday and offer you a few flowers that brought me here to-day. It was to tell you that I love you—that I have loved you in secret for years—it was to ask you to be my wife."

A faintly-breathed "Oh!" fluttered from Ethel's lips. She withdrew her fingers from his clasp gently but firmly. Everard's heart sank still lower, but he went bravely on :

"Many a time before to-day," he continued, "have I been tempted to speak to you, to tell you what I am telling you now, but it was a temptation to which I would not yield. I was a poor man with no prospects worth speaking of, and I would not seek to entangle you in an engagement which might have to last for years. But, after long waiting, Fortune's wheel has turned for me, and now——"

He ceased abruptly at the touch of her hand on his sleeve. Her large dark eyes—and at that moment they looked to him larger and darker than they had ever looked before—were gazing into his beseechingly.

"Not a word more—not one, please, Mr. Lisle," she entreated. "Oh, I am so sorry that you have told me this!"

"Is my telling it you, then, of no avail?" he demanded, a little hoarsely.

"Of none whatever," she replied with a slow shake of her head.

His eyes scanned her face searchingly and read there but too surely that his sentence was irrevocable. His chest rose and fell a few times. Not all at once could he command himself.

"So be it," he said at length. "We must all bow to the inevitable. Mine has been the mistake, and mine must be the penalty. I will not urge you by a word more, because I feel how useless it would be to do so. Nor will I longer intrude upon your time. We shall always, I trust, meet as friends in time to come."

"It would grieve me to think otherwise." Then, as she held out her hand: "Always as friends, Mr. Lisle, come what may."

With one hand he lifted his hat and with the other he raised her fingers to his lips.

"I am so sorry," again broke involuntarily from Ethel.

"The sorrow and the regret are for me," answered Everard with a dim smile as, after touching her fingers with his lips, he released them with a sort of gentle reluctance. "For you I trust there are in store many, many returns of to-day, each and all of them crowned with happiness."

Half-a-minute later she was alone.

"Everard Lisle loves me!" she murmured to herself as he disappeared round a bend of the drive. "How strange it seems! And yet, now that he has told me, I can call to mind a dozen little things, any one of which would have revealed his secret to me had I not been so blind. How cruel he must have thought me! how abrupt! And yet what other answer was it possible for me to give him? None whatever."

It may seem strange, nay, perhaps, almost incredible, to that class of young women who are in the habit of regarding three-fourths of the eligible bachelors whom they encounter here and there in society in the light of potential lovers, that Ethel Thursby had never so regarded Everard Lisle. But so it was. She had liked him, she now told herself, far better than she had liked any other of the young men whom she was in the habit of occasionally meeting; but liking is not love, and besides, Launce Keymer had already whispered certain words in her ear.

Perhaps—perhaps, if Everard Lisle had been the first to speak, who could have told what might have happened? Was there some faint premonition in her heart, as this question put itself to her, that he to whom she had given her love might, peradventure, prove less worthy of the gift than Everard would have done?

"No—no!" she told herself almost passionately. "Dear Launce is everything—yes, everything—that any girl could wish for in the man she loves."

Then she began to cry a little, being all the while indignant with herself because her tears would come in her own despite. Then with a start she bethought herself that she had to meet her aunts in the drawing-room at noon, and eleven had struck long ago. She dried her eyes and took up her flowers. More than once, as she walked towards the house, her face was hidden in the bouquet Everard had brought her. What would have been his thoughts had he been there to see?

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EBONY CASKET.

At five minutes to twelve the two Miss Thursbys, who prided themselves on their punctuality, entered the drawing-room together, or rather, to speak more correctly Miss Matilda entered first, with Miss Jane close on her footsteps, this happening to be the former's month for enacting the part of elder sister, as a consequence of which she wore what might be termed the "chain of office" with its pendant locket. That something out of the common was on foot could not be doubted, seeing that at that early hour of the day the sisters were already attired in their puce-coloured lustrous gowns, and were wearing their "company caps" and best lace mittens—a conjunction rarely, if ever, witnessed except when some special visitors were expected at Vale View.

Earlier in the day—before breakfast, indeed—they had told each other sadly and for the last time, as if their courage needed stimulating by reiterated assurances, that a certain revelation must no longer be delayed. It had been Matthew's—their dead brother's—wish that Ethel should be told on her nineteenth birthday, and with them his wishes had always been law. And yet it was a grievous thing to have to do. It seemed to them that after to-day "the child," as they still continued to call Ethel between themselves, could never regard them with quite the same eyes as heretofore. Very downcast they looked as they sat there on the ottoman, side by side, waiting for the time-piece to chime the hour of noon.

They were tall fair women, thin without being in the least degree angular; with blue eyes, rather long straight noses, and a slight droop at the corners of the mouth, which, when they were not engaged in conversation, lent them an habitually pensive air, although, in reality, they could be sprightly enough on occasion. When younger they had been noted for their lovely pink-and-white complexions, and their cheeks still retained the delicate ivory clearness of an arum lily. If one had been asked to sum up in the fewest possible words the predominant expression of the twin sisters—so strangely alike and yet not without discernible points of difference—one would have said that it was a mixture in equal parts of sweetness and goodness, and, in so saying, one would not have been far wrong. How it had come to pass that two such women—or neither of them—had never married, was one of those delicate problems which no mere bystander is justified in trying to solve. That they themselves could have told the reason why, had they chosen to do so, is scarcely to be doubted.

On the centre table stood a quaintly carved ebony casket, clamped with silver and having a silver plate let into the lid, on which, in Old English characters, was engraved the monogram, "M. T." Tamsin had brought it in and placed it there a few minutes before the entrance of the sisters.

Scarcely had the timepiece chimed the last stroke of twelve when the door opened and Ethel entered the room. Miss Matilda rose and, crossing to her, embraced her tenderly, an example which was at once followed by Miss Jane. This ceremonious greeting, taken in conjunction with her aunts' "robes of state," and the presence of the ebony casket, which she had never seen opened, but which, as long as she could remember, had been known to her as the depository of Uncle Matthew's papers, all sufficed to convince the girl that some momentous occasion was at hand. Her cheeks paled perceptibly and her limbs began to tremble. Then she drew in her breath, called herself a coward, and asked herself what she had to fear. A moment or two she stood, and then she seated herself in the pretty fancy-chair which she called her own. It had been her Aunt Jane's gift on her sixteenth birthday.

"My dear child," began Miss Matilda—and then she was compelled to pause for a few seconds before she could continue—"My dear child," she repeated, "your Aunt Jane and I have asked you to meet us in order that we may reveal to you certain circumstances connected with your early history of which you have heretofore been kept purposely in ignorance, but which it was the desire of our dear brother should be made known to you on your nineteenth birthday. That day has now arrived, and we are here in order to carry out our brother's wishes."

Miss Matilda paused again, and glanced at her sister, who responded by an encouraging nod, as much as to say, "Very nicely put, indeed."

Miss Matilda resumed:

"My dear Ethel, you have been brought up to call my sister and me by the title of Aunt—and very sweet, as coming from your lips, it has sounded in our ears—and to the world at large you have passed as our niece. But the time has now come when the truth must no longer be withheld from you. My child, you are *not* our niece, nor any relative whatsoever. It grieves me to the heart to have to tell you this."

Here the spinster's voice quavered and broke; she turned away her face. Miss Jane was biting her under-lip in an effort to keep down her emotion; one of her hands stole out and clasped a hand of her sister.

A low, inarticulate cry broke from Ethel. It was the cry of one not merely wounded, but stunned. She half rose from her chair and then sat down again and stared from one to the other, her eyes saying for her that which her lips were powerless to utter. Then all in a moment her tongue was loosened as if a cord had been cut. An instant later she was on her knees in front of the sisters, pressing a hand of each "Then, if you are not my aunts, whose child am I?" she cried aloud.

It was a quarter of an hour later. The sisters had mingled their tears with Ethel's. They had petted and made much of her till some measure of composure had come back to her. She knew that she had

not yet been told all there was to tell ; there was more to follow ; but no second shock could equal the first. The worst was known to her ; it could matter little—or so just then it seemed to her—what still remained to be told.

Presently Miss Matilda resumed her interrupted narrative.

"Many years ago—between nineteen and twenty, in point of fact—my brother Matthew, by the death of a half-cousin who had made his home in the United States, came in for a considerable legacy in the shape of landed property in that country. As a consequence, Matthew deemed it necessary that he should go out there in order to look after his interests, and he kindly offered to take my sister and me with him for a holiday. To this day Jane and I look back to that journey as the one great event of our lives. We remained in the States about three months, during which time we saw much, both of the country and the people. In the hope that the longer sea voyage would prove beneficial to my brother's health, we came back by a sailing vessel named *The Pandora*, instead of by steamer, as on our outward journey. It was in the course of our return voyage that certain events happened in connection with you, my dear child, having an important bearing on your future ; an account of which, later on, and when he felt that his time in this world was growing short, my brother embodied in the form of a written statement, which was placed by him in his ebony casket and the same given into the custody of myself and sister a few hours before he breathed his last. It is that statement which I shall now proceed to place in your hands and which it has become your duty to open and read."

As she finished speaking, Miss Matilda rose and having selected one of the keys which hung from her chatelaine, proceeded to unlock and open the casket, which proved to be full of legal-looking documents—deeds, securities and what not. From underneath these she presently drew forth an oblong envelope which she handed to Ethel. It was fastened on one side with a large red seal and on the other was endorsed, "To my adopted Niece. To be opened by her on her nineteenth birthday, or sooner should my sisters deem it advisable.—M. T."

Ethel's hands trembled in spite of her. She looked at Miss Matilda with a pitiful smile. "Will not you open it and read it for me, dear aunt—if"—with a little sigh—"I may still be allowed to call you by that name?"

"My child, it is *your* place, nay, your duty, to open it and read what you will find written therein ;" adding, with a touch of that old-fashioned phraseology which became her so well : "And I have never yet found my Ethel unresponsive to the call of duty."

Ethel said no more, but at once broke the seal and drew forth the enclosure, which consisted of a double sheet of letter paper closely covered with writing in a bold, masculine hand. The sisters, sitting bolt upright, one mittened hand laid across the other, looked on in

silence. Having laid aside the envelope and straightened out the enclosure, Ethel said to Miss Matilda: "Do you wish me to read it aloud?"

"My dear, that is entirely a matter for your own judgment. My sister and I are already cognisant of the contents, our brother having permitted us to peruse the paper previously to sealing it up."

"Still, I think I should prefer to read it aloud."

"As you please, my love."

A faint wintry smile lighted up the faces of the sisters. It was perhaps because they were so sad at heart that they smiled. It is a way their sex sometimes have.

Without further preface Ethel began to read:—

"MY DEAR CHILD,—When these lines meet your eye the hand that penned them will be dust.

"Having reason to feel assured that my remaining span of life will be a brief one, I have deemed it best, in your interests, and with a view to any contingencies which may arise in the future, to draw up a clear and succinct statement of the circumstances which first served to bring you under the notice of my sisters and myself, and led to our taking charge of you, temporarily, as we thought at the time, and ultimately to your adoption by us.

"In the autumn of the year 18— my sisters and I, after a brief sojourn in the United States, took passage on our return voyage from New York to London by the clipper ship *Pandora*. There were not more than a score of passengers in addition to ourselves, but among them was a certain Mrs. Montmorenci-Vane, with her child, a baby about six months old. Her nursemaid, according to her account, having deserted her within an hour or two of her coming on board, she engaged a young woman from among the steerage passengers to look after her child during the voyage. Unfortunately, when the voyage was about half accomplished, Mrs. Montmorenci-Vane fell overboard one dark night and was lost. There was no one on the *Pandora* who knew anything about her; she was a complete stranger to every one. In this state of affairs, my sisters, who had their maid Tamsin with them, took upon themselves the care of the drowned woman's babe for the rest of the voyage, in the expectation that some one would meet the ship on its arrival—some relative or friend—into whose hands they could transfer it.

"In point of fact, when the *Pandora* reached the London Dock it was met by a thin, shabbily-dressed, consumptive-looking man, who had come to inquire for his sister, one Martha Griggs. There was no such person on board, but, by means of a photograph, he recognised his sister in the Mrs. Montmorenci-Vane, who had fallen overboard. Never did I see a man more utterly dumfounded than he. His sister had been unmarried. Only a few months before she had gone out to the States as maid to a wealthy lady, who, a

little later, had died there. She had written to her brother that she was coming home by the *Pandora*, and had asked him to meet the ship. But as to why she had chosen to call herself Mrs. Montmorenci-Vane, why she had gone to the extravagance of paying for a cabin passage, and whence she had obtained the child she passed off on board as her own, he professed himself as being utterly unable to comprehend. That the man's wonder and amazement were genuine it was impossible to doubt.

"He was a poor man, he averred, with a family of his own, and he would have nothing to do with his sister's child, which, according to his account, was not hers at all. For anything he cared, it might go to the workhouse. He went away like a dazed man, with a promise that he would call on me the next morning; but he failed to do so, and I have never set eyes on him from that day to this.

"That the child thus strangely thrown on our hands should be committed to the tender mercies of the workhouse was not to be thought of. For the time being it was put out to nurse, where my sisters were satisfied that it would be well cared for. When, a couple of years later, they went to reside permanently at St. Oswyth's, they took the child with them, they having decided to adopt it; and, in order that the tongue of idle rumour and scandal might have no cause to wag, at my persuasion they consented to the innocent ruse of passing the girl off to the world as their niece.

"I need scarcely add that you, my dear Ethel, are the child in question.

"In these few lines are summed up the whole of the facts bearing upon your early history which are known to my sisters and myself. I may, however, be allowed to record my firm belief that the person who called herself Mrs. Montmorenci-Vane was not your mother. That, after this length of time, the mystery of your birth and parentage will ever be cleared up, seems to me exceedingly doubtful; but even should such prove to be the case, who shall venture to say that the knowledge has not been withheld from you for some wise purpose. That, should you be spared, you will grow up to be a comfort and a blessing to those who have made their home your home, and that you will return them love for love, I feel fully assured.

"MATTHEW THURSBY."

(*To be continued.*)



THE LEGEND OF THE CENTURIES.

"How forgotten will they be all—the great men of the day, when this man will be still great and shining."—FLAUBERT.

WHEN Victor Hugo, at the ripe age of eighty-three, dedicated 'La Légende des Siècles' to his beloved France, he described it as the dead fruit of a fallen tree.

The pathetic simile carried him very far from the truth: the tree was not fallen—it was more vigorous than ever: the leaves were not dead—they were still fresh and green: it may even be doubted if the first-fruits of his genius could show such beauty and variety.

Take *Océano Nox* and *Tristesse d'Olympio* from 'Les Rayons et les Ombres,' and two or three short pieces from 'Les Voix intérieures,' and both these volumes would be singularly impoverished, whereas it would be hard to find the page in this, his crowning work, that any true lover of poetry would willingly spare.

Returning to pure prose in his preface, Hugo does himself more justice. He explains the meaning of his work—its immense scope and intention—nothing less than the history of humanity in all ages; to paint it successively and simultaneously under all its aspects—history—fable—philosophy—religion—science. He says that in it will be found something of the past, something of the present, and a vague mirage of the future—that he has considered the human race, accomplishing, through the ages, a series of acts on earth under two aspects, the historic and the legendary, the latter being not less real than the former, and the former as conjectural as the latter.

He confesses that he has assigned the prominent place to the legendary aspect, but he has used the torch of truth to light up human tradition—in his own words: "*la fiction parfois—la falsification jamais.*"

The sign which marks the whole of Victor Hugo's work is this audacious touch—there is no subject that he fears to handle, armed as he always is with a keen love of justice and an implacable hatred of evil and evil-doers.

His philosophy has been much called in question as showing no fixity, and emerging only in fragments—more brilliant than solid—but whatever theory he may put forth is supported with so much vigour, so many striking analogies, such vivid and just observation that it never fails to interest; and the principle of Unity on which he insists so often and so strongly is doubtless a near approach to one of those great facts which will one day be better understood and substantiated.

His religion and his science have not always fared much better than

his metaphysics, but it is not disputed that in his perception of what is good and true, and in his manner of holding fast to what he has so found, there is the essence of all real worship and all real belief.

The 'Legend' consists of three parts. The first was sent over to Paris from Guernsey in 1859. The last was published in 1883, two years before his death, the whole having occupied him twenty-four years.

So gigantic a conception, in its magnitude and variety alone, must throw into the shade all less daring achievements, for though the history of mankind in general, under the type of a single human being, has been undertaken by such poets as Æschylus, Goëthe, and Shelley, the subject in their hands was really limited to individual experience and struggle.

With Hugo every glowing episode of a series is perfectly independent, although connected with the rest, and helps to form a complete and consecutive whole—a mosaic where every stone has its own form and colour; and surely so great a triumph of imagination, such riches of thought, such perfection of words, were never found united in more fulness of harmony.

But it is a curious fact that although his fame is well recognised in England, it is rather in connection with his novels and his plays than with his poems. 'Hernani,' 'Ruy Blas,' 'Marion Delorme,' 'Les Misérables,' 'Notre Dame,' and nearly all his other works of fiction have become familiar as household words, whilst his romances in verse are hardly known at all; and if, under that title, were published the stories of Eivradnus—Roland—Aymerillot—and Ruy Diaz the Cid—a great many people would be fain to confess they never even heard of them!

Moreover the mass of English readers would be startled if the sweetness, grace and tenderness of Victor Hugo were cited as his distinguishing qualities, for many of his most exquisite creations are those which strike the ordinary critic as most foreign to his genius.

He is accounted to prefer depicting immense material spaces filled with Titanic forms, painted after history or fable, or fashioned out of a grandiose dream-world of his own. His strength, his grandeur, his scorn—are accepted as his prominent, if not his sole characteristics; but Théophile Gautier, who knew him better, declared of him that he was wholly a lyrical poet.

The first series of the 'Legend' is a somewhat sombre retrospect, and like the prelude to a song half dreamlike—half suggestive—confused at times—as the voices of Nature are confused. He gives the rein to his pictorial fancy: the long reveries of exile—the winds and storms of the sea transport him into distant worlds where facts appear like visions.

This is naturally the case with the Hebrew stories—the mission of woman—the first appearance of evil, when the conscience takes the form of the visible eye of God—and the pastorals.

The first distinct note is sounded in the Romancers of the Cid, and the taking of Narbonne, when Charlemagne returning from his wars in Spain, full of grief for the loss of Roland, and half his chivalry in the valley of Roncevaux is suddenly roused by the sight of battlements and glittering towers.

He sees before him another conquest, his crosses are at an end, and turning to the dukes and barons in his train he proposes to take the city. But they are weary of warfare, and grim and rueful, each in turn with characteristic speech refuses the enterprise.

With happy descriptive strokes, this old delightful record of chivalry shows us the fury of the Emperor with his grand seigneurs, the renewed bitterness of mourning for the Paladins—the giants—who would have attempted the conquest of a world at his command—and then the picture of the young squire who steps from out the ranks

“With confident, serene, intrepid air,”

and offers to take the city.

All the music of morning, says Swinburne—all the sunshine of romance, all the sweetness and charm of chivalry will come back upon all readers, at the gracious and radiant name of Amerillot.

“*La force, toujours la force,*” was the outcry of Hugo’s literary detractors when the second series of the ‘Legend’ appeared. The old man, they said, had lost nothing of his energy; it almost appeared as if this were increased by the loss of former grace and finesse; but what happened to ancient trees had happened to him—the bark had thickened, and the delicate canals through which the sap used to flow so easily, were almost closed: the verses had become, they said, like blocks of stone: the poet had attempted greater things than ever, and had succeeded, but the agility was not the same; the chords were louder, and less musical.

But this was captious criticism.

The faithful chronicler did but record the treacheries and rough revenges of early civilisation, where enmities were bound to end in battles, rejoicings in excesses, revels in orgies.

Hugo’s genius leans to the side of mystery; he is a master of all that is colossal, but he is at his highest and best in all that is magnanimous. He loves the glowing colours of mediæval romance, the cycle of heroic deeds, and the tender human interest of peaceful days.

The poet, like the reader, turns with satisfaction from the terrors of conscience and the heights of Olympus to the ideal figure of the Cid, to the fisherman’s cottage, and the garden of little Paul.

One of the innumerable signs of this will be noticed in the *Romancers*, where those *fyttes* in the ballad which refer to the Spanish king’s ingratitude and treachery, are less striking in tone and metaphor, than those in which the Cid gives expression to his own

conduct and feelings. The tyrant visits him in his banishment, having said to his retainers very significantly—

“When an old man is a sword,
Then the coffin is a sheath.”

The Cid bids his enemy welcome, divining that he is not without a coward's fear as he approaches the threshold.

“Enter, Sire ! O King ! my guest !
For but one star shines in Heaven.

“Shines in depths of darkest night,
'Tis not riches, love or fame ;
But the torch of truth and right,
Loyalty and stainless name.

“And I pray my prayer be heard,
I upon whose breastplate lie,
Snowflakes of the silver beard—
That whene'er I come to die,

“Be the day or near or far,
Whensoever God sees fit ;
From the shining of that star
Round my bier the lamps be lit.”

In this Pyrenean cycle, so well beloved by Hugo, no tale is more profoundly pathetic than is told in ‘Paternity.’

“Father and son
Both heroes—peers—
Grandees of Spain.”

inhabit a grand old fortress longtime held against the Moors. They are both of the same type of warlike chivalry, but the father's creed was the finer of the two ; and, one unlucky day, Don Ruy, having sought permission to pass across a neighbouring state, and having been rudely refused, resented the insult with all the violence of the time. He entered the territory with all his band and sacked the town.

“He showed nor grace
Nor pity—and three days the sun went down
Upon this horror.”

And this is why the father struck the son.

“Then,” said Don Ruy, “I go—
An insult is a sling which throws the soul
Into the pit of darkness—I go hence
And have a right to wrath, for an offence
From sire to son is of so deep a dye,
That 'tis the end and death of infancy—
The desert is my place !”

Hardly has the offender passed from sight than Don Jayme repents

of his violence; blinded with tears he descends into the crypt, where his ancestors are buried, and kneeling before the statue of his own father gives way to a very passion of grief.

It is one of Hugo's pure touches of nature.

He recalls his own youth in his self-inflicted desolation—his own love, reverence, and submission, making his appeal for sympathy to the cold stone in the most pathetic words, and one can hardly find it extravagant when by one of those inspired fancies with which all readers of the 'Legend,' must be familiar, the pitiful story closes with a miracle :

"And hand no eye could see
Passed with sublime caress above his head."

The sword of retribution which ends the cruelties of Rathbert, tyrant of Italy, and which is seen by a holy monk to be wiped by an archangel on the clouds of Heaven, is another of these splendid impossibilities, and through this very much longer story, another delicate thread is woven by the tenderest recital of the love of an old warrior for his little murdered grandchild.

These heroes of an almost forgotten time are the most vivid of all Victor Hugo's creations, and amongst them stands pre-eminent the magnificent figure of Eviradnus, grander even than Roland, and even than the Cid. His mission is the same—to fight single-handed against a world of injustice—to protect the helpless and punish the malefactor; but unlike the knights errant of convention, "by fairy fiction drest," he is no dweller in enchanted garden; he is a mortal man, and old: hardship, weariness and peril have been his life-long companions, he has pity on the weak because he is strong, and to the wicked shows no mercy. He has a fit setting in the old feudal Hall of Corbus, where we again trace the likeness of those ruined castles in the Rhineland which inspired 'Les Burgraves,' and always clung faithfully to the poet's recollection. We see before us the ruined keep, the crumbling battlements half hidden in their mocking garlands the moss and weed, the pits where torrents rose and fell—the secret dens—the precipices—the solitude and gloom without—within the spectral banquet and the still more spectral forms of iron knights on monstrous steeds—the effigies of dead and buried warriors.

The story tells that in Lusatia, on the death of the reigning prince, his successor is bound to keep vigil in the ruined Keep of Corbus, alone, and is there visited by the spectres of his ancestors.

Even women are not exempt from the ordeal, and when Mahand, young and lovely princess, came to reign, she had to face it.

Two neighbouring kings, renowned for their unscrupulous and wicked deeds, determined to obtain possession of herself and her inheritance, and under the disguise of Troubadours, presented themselves at her court, where merrymaking was the order of the day.

Eviradnus, unseen in one of the sheltered glades of the forest,

overheard them as they whispered together hatching their infamous plots, and rapidly devised a scheme to undermine them. He had no time to lose, for the evening was closing in, and the ruin was already lighted for the ghostly banquet. Passing like a shadow by the conspirators, he makes his way to the castle accompanied by his page, who is dismissed as soon as he learns from younger eyes than his own that the Princess is on her way escorted by the Troubadours, whose guardianship she has unsuspectingly accepted. He watches their approach, and then surveys the cavernous hall with its long files of iron men, and turning to the table spread with delicacies, would very willingly have helped himself to a draught of the rich red wine, for he is weary, but he reflects that a drop left in the cup, or a stain upon the cloth might betray him : he refrains, and lifting one of the iron horsemen from the saddle, takes his place. Closing his vizor,

"He sits a thing of stone : the very tomb
Had been deceived !"

The lights and shadows here are very finely touched in a succession of quickly changing pictures. We see the moonlit glade through which the lady and the minstrels pass—the threshold of the sombre ruin which they cross with gay and careless jesting—the table with its legendary chandeliers—its golden flagons. We see Mahand in her trance, and her murderers as they are about to carry her to the oubliette, prepared to hide the evidence of their crime, when they are paralysed with terror, at what they imagine the supernatural appearance of the nearest spectre knight descending from his steed.

Eviradnus scorns to take advantage of their panic : he likes not to be dreaded *otherwise than with the fear to which he's used*—he lays down his armour and there follows the unequal combat with its ghastly finish.

The peaceful dawn has come when Mahand opens her eyes—

"And thinks she dreams when at her side she sees,
A Knight in armour on his bended knees."

After the cycle of Kings and Paladins, we reach the 16th century—Renaissance Paganism—in which the rise of artistic instinct and feeling is described in an allegory—the story of a Satyr who is brought by Hercules into the midst of the gods at Olympus, and sings of nature—of the beauty of the universe—of man and the emancipation of man, in a sort of poetical inspiration and ecstasy.

As he sings, he gradually loses his humble shape. The Faun rises into a god and proclaims himself to be Pan—the spirit that moves through all things.

This flight of fancy amongst ancient myths, has of course found many cavillers. His limitless imagination leads him into realms where he is not easy to follow, and he was severely censured for what critics called his caprices.

He had an answer ready, and declared that he was not aware how the limits of art were defined—that he did not know the precise geography of the intellectual world, and that he had not seen any map of its various routes, with its frontiers between the possible and the impossible marked out in red and blue.

Strikingly original in every conception, Victor Hugo possesses in an extraordinary degree what may be called the vision of things invisible, and he is stronger than any other poet in his power of developing an idea by a series of analogies all manifestly appropriate and just. Although image may be piled on image—symbol upon symbol—nothing is allowed to obscure the clearness of the original thought, and abnormal objects are made to appear familiar.

Still it is quite possible that the general reader will turn with a feeling of relief from the story of the Satyr, to the Infanta's Rose—'a crowning flower of song'—parable of the broken Armada, suggested by a wrecked fleet of drifting petals.

The last volume of the 'Legend' contains three fine historical sketches needing no charm of imagination, but still embellished by the poet's sympathy with all that is heroic.

'Jean Chouan' a tale of La Vendée—'Civil war'—'and Eylan Cemetery,' of which it has been said there is no better fighting in the Iliad.

Before the number dedicated to "The little ones," of which the story of 'Petit Paul' is the gem, the meditative Alexandrine gives way to a lyric which must touch all hearts.

Napoleon returns to Paris after the last battle—a broken man. For three days he wanders about alone in his deserted Palace, watched only by the sentinels, who as his shadow passed

"Saw in the Emperor's face
The Empire's fall."

Crushed and forsaken, he still maintains that supreme belief in himself and in his star, which in every reverse of fortune never abandoned him, and exclaims

"I shall return—
The sea shall bear me on
To my deliverance!
Victor I shall return!
O Paris! France!"

The manner of his return, deaf to the conquering march—to the roar of cannon—the acclamations of the people—blind even to the presence of the grim veterans last of the old guard who stoop to kiss his horse's feet—is told with the deepest feeling, it is one of the pictures in words which cannot be surpassed.

If it were possible to choose from out this abundance, this prodigality of riches, the best sample of the poet's comprehensive genius, one might name 'Poor people' as containing many of his salient points.

He has often touched upon the humble heroism of which he was

an eye-witness on the coast of Guernsey, and always with the same sympathy for obscure sorrows and patience, but never before with such precision and detail, and such a variety of vivid pictures. One can almost listen for the sound of the sea and feel the blast of the storm.

“Whilst outside, menacingly,
Sinister ocean sobs.”

We can see the poor small cabin where the fisherman's wife watches in an agony of fear—the little children sleeping, a nest of souls, and can almost hear the ceaseless tick of the old clock, in its case, ‘like pulses in a vein.’

She goes out at length into the darkness and passes a hovel more ruinous than her own :

“The roof is tottering
And tufts of thatch and mosses writhe and swing.
She stops—she listens—not a sound : she calls—
Silence—her voice alone on darkness falls.
She knocks, and then as if e'en lifeless things
At times take pity, the door backward swings.
She enters : on the floor a woman lies—
A corpse—the spectre of dead miseries.
All that remains the last sad battle o'er,
Two children lie asleep upon the floor,
Under her gown which she had striven to fold,
To keep them warm whilst she was growing cold.
How peacefully they sleep, as if no sound
Could break the orphans' slumber, soft, profound ;
Not even were earth and sky together rent,
They fear no judgment, being innocent.
And the rain falls, slow drops each other chase,
Through the torn roof upon that white dead face ;
Falling like tears, as if the senseless clay
Wept for the angel that had passed away.”

The passion of mercy in Jeannie's heart overcomes the reflection that her own five are hungry and that her husband risks his life to provide for them : she goes back with the orphans in her arms and waits for his return in hesitation, almost in fear.

She had no cause to fear : the sailor has all her own compassion for the “bits of things,” and comforts her in the faith that when within his home there are more mouths to feed, he shall be made to catch more fish.

We know of no poet in any language whose telling of a plain unvarnished tale is so touching or so delicate.

It is not the aspect of Victor Hugo's many-sided genius most familiar to English readers, but it will be doing them good service to point it out.

Much that is noticeable has been necessarily passed over, and we call to mind his own terse sentence :

“Fen passe—et des meilleurs.”

C. E. MEETKERKE.

THE TOMB OF A PROPHET.

IN my young days, no writer had so great, and, I think I may say so beneficial an effect upon me as Oliver Wareham.

His influence, at that time, was rather deep than wide, his readers were not very numerous, nor were his works to be found on every railway bookstall; yet I believe few men read his 'Prose Poems' without becoming a friend of the author.

A friend in imagination that is, for no man with an equal literary reputation was so little known in literary circles; and it was only a week before my departure for India, that I discovered he lived in the town of Sandygate, a flourishing little place, the centre of a large, agricultural district in the Eastern counties.

It is strange how often, when you hear of a new place for the first time, you presently hear something quite fresh about it, immediately afterwards, from a new source.

The very day after I discovered Wareham's dwelling-place, I went to take leave of my newly-married cousin, Jane Oldcastle, and the chief subject of her conversation was a recent visit to her husband's relations at Clifbury.

"It's about a mile from Sandygate," she added, as she finished her account of the place.

"Sandygate!" I exclaimed. "Why that's where Oliver Wareham lives. Did you meet him while you were at Clifbury?"

"Oh, no!" replied Jane.

"Don't the Oldcastles know him?"

"No," said Jane again.

"Why not?" I asked.

"They couldn't. He's the registrar for births, deaths and marriages at Sandygate."

"But he's the author of 'Prose Poems,'"

"Oh, I believe he's clever. I remember when we were driving past the Registrar's office, one day, Colonel Oldcastle said to me in his funny way: 'There's a writing fellow lives in that house, Jane, and they say he's a very clever fellow too. Pity he isn't a gentleman, or we might ask him to dinner.' It was a pity certainly, for the dinners at Clifbury were just a little dull—and such a pack of women too, Mrs. Oldcastle and all those girls!" and Jane gave a little sigh at the remembrance.

"It's monstrous!" I exclaimed. "I'd stake my existence, that the author of 'Prose Poems' is a gentleman at heart; he has enough refinement, and tenderness of feeling, and intellect to furnish forth half-a-dozen gentlemen."

"Oh, we all know you are a Radical!" retorted Jane; "but just

wait till you are married yourself, and go and live near a country town, and then see if you'd visit a man, who lives in an ugly, little red-brick house, and whose wife isn't a bit a lady. His relations are quite low people, and one of his cousins is going to marry the Oldcastles' kitchen-maid! Even you would see he was impossible; and the Oldcastles are most particular. They don't visit anyone in Sandygate except the Rector, and he is one of the Framlingham family."

It was hopeless trying to make Jane see anything from my point of view, and I could not even glean the smallest facts about my hero, except those recorded in her last speech. But my enthusiasm was unabated, or even increased by what she had told me; and if I had not promised my mother that my five remaining days in England should belong to her, I should have started off upon a pilgrimage to Sandygate.

I contented myself with writing a letter to Wareham, impulsive, romantic, and no doubt foolish, which I sent to him the day before I sailed for India, and to which I never received an answer.

But I knew I had no right to expect one, and my admiration was in no wise affected by Wareham's justifiable neglect of me. 'Prose Poems' accompanied me to India, and was one of the few books which I carried about in my wanderings. Wareham was not a prolific writer; once or twice I was made happy by reading some contribution of his in one of the magazines; but it was five years before a fresh volume of his collected sketches, the well-known 'Afterwards' was published.

I ordered it immediately, and as soon as it reached the little station of Anjepoor, where I was then acting as assistant magistrate, I read the book through at a sitting.

The pale light of early morning was stealing across my compound when, at length, I withdrew my eyes from the book. I am not sure but the tears were standing in them, at least I felt profoundly moved.

In that last chapter there was an allusion to an unknown correspondent, and I had recognized a phrase out of that old, boyish letter of mine. I hardly knew why it had touched me so deeply, but I almost felt as if I had received a message from the dead.

The evening of the same day, as I was returning from my usual ride, I turned into the little club, where we Anglo-Indian exiles met each other, to hear what news might be going in the place.

"There's Sefton!" remarked one of the men, as he saw our popular station doctor coming along the road.

"He won't come in here to-night," said another.

"Why not?"

"Had bad news from home. His wife's brother is dead. A very clever fellow too, Oliver Wareham—perhaps you know his books."

"Oliver Wareham dead!" I exclaimed.

"Yes ; but I didn't know he was a friend of yours."

I did not stop to reply. Dr. Sefton was just passing along on the opposite side of the road, and I ran hastily across and spoke to him.

I am afraid that, at first, I was rather incoherent, and Sefton seemed a little bewildered by my agitation.

"I was not aware that you knew my brother-in-law," he said, and then I was able to explain.

He listened to me very kindly.

"Come home with me, and see my wife ; she will like to talk with you."

It is useless to recall our conversation.

To those who knew nothing of Wareham, our talk would seem strained and exaggerated ; while it would be superfluous to describe to those who knew and loved him the feelings with which we spoke of him, flung suddenly together, as we were, by the shock of his death.

Later on I learnt that Wareham had lost a deeply-loved wife, and had left no near relation except one daughter, a girl of thirteen called Olivia.

I asked Sefton whether Wareham had ever suffered from the comparative neglect with which he had been treated, and the want of society at Sandygate.

"I like the way in which you well-born people limit the use of the word society to intercourse with such as yourselves," replied the doctor. "Don't run off with the idea that Wareham felt himself unappreciated and misunderstood. Few men were ever more heartily loved by those around them ; he numbered half the people of Sandygate among his friends, and even John Vincent, who quarrelled with every one else, could never succeed in quarrelling with Wareham."

"Who is John Vincent ?" I asked.

"Wareham's father-in-law, and a brave honest fellow in spite of his queer temper. He was foreman at the gun-cotton factory. You may remember the terrible explosion they had there ten years ago. Things would have been even worse than they were, if it had not been for Vincent's courage and presence of mind. Since then, they have moved the factory to Aldiston, five miles from the town. It is a desolate place for a child, but I suppose poor little Olivia must stay there till we can go home and look after her."

II.

My familiar intercourse with the Seftons was interrupted at the end of six months, by my transfer to Ferzerabad at the further end of the presidency.

We occasionally exchanged letters, but I did not see my friends again before they left India, some three years later, and travelled

slowly to England, spending a month or two in Italy on their way home. During these years the fame of Wareham had grown with surprising rapidity, and when, after ten years of India, I once more set foot in England, 'Prose Poems' was in its fifteenth edition and 'Afterwards' had reached its twelfth.

Everybody knew Wareham's name, and everybody had read his books—or said he had.

I suppose it is always trying to the original followers of a man of genius, when their hero becomes the object of promiscuous admiration and misapplied adjectives, and the prevalent Wareham worship irritated me a little unreasonably.

I could not even make up my mind to pay my long-deferred visit to Sandygate, till I received a pressing invitation from Jane Oldcastle to come and see her at Clifbury.

Old Colonel Oldcastle had been gathered to his fathers, the dowager and "all those girls" had retired to Bournemouth, and Jane and her husband ruled in their stead.

Sandygate was the station for Clifbury, a commonplace little town, with wide clean streets and small houses. I turned my steps towards the old grey church, and walked around the well-filled churchyard. At the highest part of the ground there was a pretty view of Sandygate, seen through overarching trees, and here I found the object of my search.

A simple gravestone recorded the name of Emma, wife of Oliver Wareham, with her age and the date of her death. Beneath it ran a still shorter inscription, "Also of Oliver Wareham her husband." "Bury me at her feet, and put those words on her tomb," had been his funeral directions; and his friends had paid him the tribute of obedience.

I thanked them in my heart, as I thought of his simple truthful life, blest by a great love and glorified by a great gift, and then I turned away to keep my appointment with Jane Oldcastle.

I received a friendly welcome from my cousin and her husband, and I was pleased to meet young Framlingham, an old schoolfellow of mine, and a good-natured, honest fellow, though not over-abundantly furnished with brains.

Our other guests were the Vicar of Clifbury and the Rector of Sandygate, and during a pause in the conversation I spoke to the Rector of my visit to Sandygate churchyard, and of how pleased I had been with Oliver Wareham's tomb.

Had I suddenly fired off a pistol at the dinner table, it would hardly have created more consternation than my innocent remark.

The Rector and the Vicar exchanged involuntary glances, Oldcastle's face flushed an angry red, and Framlingham's milder countenance was dyed a scarlet hue.

Jane, who had given a little gasp of dismay, was the first to recover herself, and adroitly changed the conversation; but later in the

evening, when I found myself alone with her for a few minutes, I asked what was the meaning of the little scene.

"Poor Wareham seems to have become as explosive as dynamite."

"Oh, please don't say anything about it," said Jane eagerly. "It makes George so angry. Wait till to-morrow. George will be out for the whole morning, and then you can get Mr. Framlingham to tell you all about it. He won't much like it, but he's so good-natured, that that doesn't matter. Now George——"

"Never mind George. I want you to sing to me, Jane. You promised to have a fine voice, when I left England."

"Promised!" exclaimed Jane, with a toss of her head; but she went to the piano all the same, and the evening ended in harmony.

III.

"MR. FRAMLINGHAM," said Jane, the next morning, "my cousin wants you to tell him that strange story about the Wareham memorial."

"Oh! come now, Mrs. Oldcastle, that's a little rough on me—now isn't it?" pleaded poor Framlingham.

"Not at all," said Jane. "However," she added, relenting a little, "I'll begin the story for you; only mind, when I come to your part in it, you must tell it yourself."

Framlingham assented, with melancholy submission, and Jane addressed herself to me.

"It is very tiresome to have a genius living within a mile of your house, especially when he's only a registrar, and you can't possibly ask him to dinner.

"Colonel Oldcastle wouldn't have dreamt of such a thing. But people are so stupid and inconsiderate, that when this Wareham died, and the newspapers published little lives of him, and mentioned that he lived at Sandygate, everybody seemed to think we must have known him.

"People used to be so surprised we hadn't done so; it was most disagreeable. I think it was very tiresome of the newspapers to say he was a native of Sandygate—just as if it mattered to any one!

"We met a good many Americans in London, that season, and they were most absurd about Wareham. Stella Vanburgh actually asked me, if I didn't think it a privilege to have had him for a fellow-citizen; and yet she's a really nice girl, with the prettiest curly fringe to her hair, and eighty thousand pounds of her own!

"We really got quite worried about the man, and the Framlinghams were just as badly off—weren't you?" said Jane, appealing to her other companion.

"I didn't care," replied Framlingham. "Wareham was a very good fellow, I often met him in Sandygate, and he knew a horse when he saw one, as well as any man in Sandysshire."

"Ah, but your brother didn't like it, neither did Lady Framlingham," said Jane. "Besides, everybody was talking of those books—you know what I mean,—prosy poems, or something of that sort. Then Sir Gilbert is so very conscientious; he got it into his head that he hadn't done his duty by Wareham. He thought he ought to have encouraged him."

"Gilbert's a great man for encouraging everything," said his brother, particularly when it's local. Genius, and industries, and races; he encourages all of them in his own neighbourhood. He feels he owes it to the county."

"That's why he's so popular, and such a model country gentleman," said Jane; "but he was too sensitive about Wareham."

"Is George also pining because he didn't encourage Wareham?" I asked.

"Not exactly. But he was put out about it, and at last he said, 'Let's do something for the man, and be——,' but never mind exactly what George said.

"He and Sir Gilbert agreed that something had better be done, and Mr. Hunter, the mayor of Sandygate, agreed with them, and so did everybody else, except a disagreeable Dr. Sefton, who was a relation of Wareham's.

"Instead of sending us a handsome subscription, he wrote an absurd letter, saying he believed the proposed memorial would be contrary to Oliver Wareham's wishes, and almost enough to make his ghost return to earth, and pull it down.

"Just as if any of us cared about Oliver Wareham's wishes!

"The letter made George very angry, and he vowed there should be a memorial to Wareham in Sandygate, though all the ghosts in the churchyard got up and opposed it. George is somewhat obstinate, and he persuaded the others to put up a statue of Wareham in the churchyard, as near as possible to Wareham's grave.

"He had no proper tombstone, you know, only a corner of his wife's, which looked very shabby; and when foreigners and Americans and learned sort of people come down here and want to see his tomb, of course there's nothing to show them, and they look disappointed and say 'oh,' as if it were our fault."

Jane sighed as she spoke, and I felt it was inconsiderate in a man of genius to have got himself born in Sandygate.

"We worked very hard," she continued, "and got quite a handsome sum, enough to order a statue from Baron von Bergfeld. Everybody goes to von Bergfeld, now-a-days: besides, he is a friend of Lady Framlingham's, and generally comes to her receptions. It was unlucky that he had never seen Wareham, and there wasn't a portrait to be got of the man, for love or money. But von Bergfeld is so clever; he made a large pedestal with bas-reliefs upon it from Wareham's works, and an ideal statue to put on the top of it. Really, the likeness didn't matter. Those Americans and

people had never seen him ; the only persons who could have told if it was like, were the natives of Sandygate, and they were of no consequence.

"It was a lovely thing, and though they wouldn't have it in the Royal Academy, everybody knows the academicians are jealous of foreigners."

"But what has become of this work of art?" I inquired.

"You shall hear. Von Bergfeld sent the thing down, and Dawson the stonemason, who does all the tombstones in Sandygate, was charged with putting it up. Sir Gilbert said we must employ Dawson to encourage local trade ; and we had arranged to have a nice little ceremony on the 20th of February, when Lady Framlingham was to unveil the statue.

"On the morning of the 19th, Giles, the police sergeant from Sandygate, came up and spoke to George. He told him he believed there must be a plot in Sandygate to destroy the memorial. He was rather mysterious about it, and had no evidence against any particular person ; but he had an impression that the lower classes in Sandygate did not like the memorial ; and there was an expectation in the town, that something would happen to prevent the ceremony from taking place next day.

"George was put out ; he said that it wasn't his business, as a magistrate, to attend to impressions and expectations. And then he forgot the matter till dinner-time, when he told Mr. Framlingham and me about it.

"It reminded me of the warning which somebody sent somebody about the Gunpowder plot, and Mr. Framlingham said Giles was a shrewd fellow, and generally knew what he was talking about.

"Then George got anxious, and Mr. Framlingham offered to walk over to Sandygate with him and see if things were quiet there. "And now, I think I have told my share," concluded Jane abruptly. We both looked at Framlingham.

"Mind," said he, "I don't believe what I am going to tell you."

"Then why tell it?"

"Because it's the story. Oldcastle and I left this house at eleven o'clock, and went to Sandygate, where every one seemed to be asleep.

"Oldcastle took his revolver with him, which I thought a mistake. I don't like fire-arms, except, of course, in a regular way, or for birds or four-footed creatures. At other times they are apt to get people into trouble, or into those beastly newspapers, which is almost as bad.

"The statue was all right when we got to the churchyard ; it looked white in the light of a very bright moon.

"We sat down and watched, but there wasn't a sound till the clock struck twelve. Then Oldcastle turned to me and said it was all humbug, and we had better go home.

"The words were hardly out of his mouth, when we saw a man standing on the little platform beside the statue. The moon shone

full upon his face, and we saw Oliver Wareham as plainly as I now see you. There could be no mistake about him; his was not a common face, and even his dress was just as it used to be. He had on an old blue riding-cloak, which used to hang behind the door in his office, and was lined with a dark and white check stuff. As he stood there, a little gust of wind blew back a corner of the cloak, and showed the check lining. I could have sworn to that cloak among a thousand.

"His head was thrown back, so that we could see his face in spite of his big felt hat, and he looked quite young again, as he used to look before his wife died and he fell ill.

"I forgot he was dead, and called out 'Hullo! Wareham,' and was running up to shake hands with him, when Oldcastle pulled me back.

"What are you thinking of?' he cried. 'I'm not going to be made a fool of like this. Let me put a bullet into the rascal, and we'll see if he's dead or alive.'

"Oldcastle was white with rage, and had got his revolver pointed at Wareham. I was just in time to knock the barrel up, and the charge went off into the air.

"What do you mean by that?' roared Oldcastle, and, for a moment, I believed he meant to put a second shot into me. Then, I thought he had actually fired, but the report was too loud for a revolver; a revolver doesn't shake the ground so that you stagger backwards as Oldcastle and I did, till we each clutched hold of the other, to steady ourselves a bit.

"Then we stood still and turned round to look again at Wareham. But he was gone, and the memorial had disappeared with him. There were little bits of marble, scattered all over the place, but we never saw anything more of Wareham.

"Oldcastle was wild with me for not letting him shoot, but if you've been friendly with a fellow, you can't stand by and see him potted at, and Wareham was always a good sort.

"That's what I saw. I can't explain anything, but I don't believe in ghost stories. This is a ghost story, so I don't believe it, as I told you at the beginning."

"Can you explain it?" I asked Jane. She shook her head.

"I wish I could. It's absurd believing in ghosts; and I don't choose to be absurd, and yet——"

"I'd give half I am worth not to have gone to Sandygate that night!" exclaimed Framlingham. It's impossible to believe in ghosts, you know, and it's impossible to doubt your own eyes. Then, I don't like to think of Wareham doing a thing like that. He was such a kind-hearted fellow when he was alive, it's strange he should come back to play such a nasty trick on one. It fairly muddles a fellow's mind."

"It's a strange tale," I said, as I took my leave. "If ever I come upon the explanation, I will relieve your mind."

But when I said this, I spoke rashly.

IV.

"So they never put up that memorial to Oliver after all," said Mrs. Sefton to me a week later on, when I was spending a few days with her and the doctor. "Well, it was a foolish scheme," she continued, but why was it not carried out?"

"You don't mean to say you have not heard the story!" I exclaimed.

"We were in Rome at the time," put in Dr. Sefton, "and we only returned to England on hearing that old John Vincent had died suddenly, and our niece Olivia was dangerously ill. My wife hurried to Aldiston, nursed the poor child back to life again, and, as soon as she could be moved, we took her abroad with us. We were nearly two years on the Continent and only came back to England three months ago.

"But Aldiston is only five miles from Sandygate," I objected "surely the tale had travelled so far."

Dr. Sefton said nothing, and left his wife to answer my remark.

"I suppose I was too much engrossed with Olivia to notice anything," she said; "but please to tell me the story, now you have excited my curiosity."

I complied with her request; but, as Jane Oldcastle had truly said, it was a tale which was not to be believed in, when heard at second hand. Mrs. Sefton laughed when I had finished it.

"It is too grotesque," she exclaimed, "to imagine that Oliver's ghost should return to earth, to spite the neighbours who had not asked him to dinner."

"Perhaps Lady Framlingham and Mrs. Oldcastle set a higher value on their dinners than you do," said Dr. Sefton; "and I have an idea that a good many people—Old John Vincent, among others—considered that they did not appreciate Oliver as they should. But don't say anything about all this before Olivia," he added, with a sudden look of anxiety in his face. "I can hear she is just come in."

"What quick ears you have!" said his wife, and a minute later, Olivia Wareham entered the room. She was a very tall and handsome girl, who looked a good deal older than her age, for she was only eighteen. At first, I thought this might be the result of ill-health; but Dr. Sefton told me, later on, it was the effect of the solitary life she had led with her grandfather at Aldiston, and the passionate grief she had experienced at her father's death.

She had a dreamy expression in her dark eyes, and took little share in our conversation, but she was evidently a good listener, and when she spoke, I was struck with the beauty of the voice.

Though we attended to Dr. Sefton's warning about the ghost story, our talk seemed continually to recur to the subject of Wareham; and

while we were having dinner, I asked Mrs. Sefton if she could not show me a likeness of her brother.

"Only that," she replied, pointing to her niece; "Olivia might pass for her father any day, if you dressed her up in man's clothes."

Olivia suddenly put up her hand to her head.

"Oh, Aunt Clara!" she exclaimed, "what you say reminds me of something which I dreamt when I was ill,—what could it have been?"

"Don't try to remember," said her uncle hastily; "you will bring back your headaches again, if you are not careful."

"Ah! you have made me forget," she said; "I should have remembered, I think, if you had not interrupted me."

A look of relief passed over Dr. Sefton's face. It occurred to me that this was the second time he had wished to keep something from his niece. Could there be any connection between the two subjects? He may have noticed the question in my face, for he turned to me with an explanation.

"You know that Olivia was very ill two years ago. Her illness has resulted in a complete loss of memory of all the time she spent with her grandfather. She remembers nothing from the time of her father's death, till the day when she woke up to find that Aunt Clara had come back from India, and was taking care of her."

"And I do so want to know all about it," said Olivia, "but Uncle James will tell me nothing."

"But, dear child, we know nothing," said Dr. Sefton; "remember, we were in India all that time."

"Of course," agreed Olivia; "and you have given me such good things to recollect since I have been with you, and I used to be so happy with my father before, it is greedy of me to worry after those three lost years, as if I had not got enough happiness to remember."

"And would it be happiness if you did remember?" was the question which rose to my lips; but I had the discretion to keep silent, and then the two ladies rose, and left me alone with Dr. Sefton.

We were silent for some minutes, and then I looked up to find my companion's eyes were fixed upon my face, as if he had been reading every strange idea, every wild surmise, which had been rushing through my mind during those brief moments.

We exchanged one of those glances, which say more than many words can tell, and then Sefton stretched out his hand to me.

"You will keep my secret," he said.

I laid my hand in his, in token of assent, and he continued:

"Even my wife has no suspicion of the truth, and you and I will never put it into words. It is like the secret of King Midas, not to be breathed, even to the reeds by the riverside."

"And no one else suspects?" I inquired.

"Not a soul."

We have kept our own counsel, and the mystery attending Oliver Wareham's reappearance has remained unsolved.

None knew how far Olivia's mind had been unhinged by her father's death. When the monument was put up, knowing how he would have disliked it, she brooded over it until she was no longer accountable for what she did. Sallying forth one evening, dressed in her father's clothes, a packet of gunpowder under her arm, she went to the churchyard. What happened the reader knows : how she laid her train and escaped uninjured will never be known. The next day she was raving in brain fever, and when she recovered, her memory for those recent events had gone. She never recovered those three lost years ; it has fallen to my lot to supply her with other and, I trust, happier memories.

Jane Oldcastle meets her in London sometimes, and is graciously pleased to approve of her manner and appearance. "Though where she gets that style of hers is a mystery," remarks my cousin, with her usual plain-speaking. We are still good friends, though I decline all invitations to Clifbury, and Jane triumphs over me, as she remarks :

"Ah ! radical opinions are all very well for unmarried men ; but, you see, now you are married, you object to kitchenmaid cousins as much as anybody. You will never bring Olivia within ten miles of Sandygate."

"Never," I reply.

Olivia has acquiesced in my decision. I have persuaded her that it will be better not to try and pull aside the veil, which has been so mercifully drawn across those three troubled years.

For a time, I feared the blank might still be a source of unhappiness to her ; but my mind was set at rest after our first child was born, when I chanced to hear a few words which she and Mrs. Sefton exchanged upon the subject.

"Has the memory of what happened before your illness ever returned to you, Olivia ?" asked her aunt.

"Not a gleam," replied Olivia.

"I hope you don't worry about it as you used to do."

"Oh, no ! I am quite satisfied now."

"Because you are so happy ?"

"Perhaps. But really, I think I am content to know nothing, because I feel sure my husband knows all."

"My dear," exclaimed Mrs. Sefton, "you are just like me, for I am certain that my husband knows all about it too."

Then they both kissed each other, and as I walked softly away, I said to myself "the ways of women are strange."



LETTERS FROM SOUTH AFRICA.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "IN THE LOTUS-LAND," ETC., ETC.

CAPE TOWN, *April*, 1893.

CARE AMICE,—My first letter came to an abrupt ending, for which no doubt you were duly grateful. The pen having run away with the charms and counter-charms of Madeira, I had to pass over the voyage, and barely announce our anchorage under the giant shadow of Table Mountain.

With regard to that voyage, I do not know that there is much more to record. I can only say that a journey in one of these monster vessels, gives opportunity for a life as mildly dissipated as anything to be found under the sun. There is no fear that time will hang heavily upon the hands. Talk to me no more of the repose of a sea-trip. The idea is a delusion. It is nothing but a succession of sports, including sack-races and every other race ever invented; cricket; chess and other tournaments; concerts, dances, fancy-dress balls, all following each other in breathless array. In short, life is nothing but a round of frivolity; harmless, no doubt, but perhaps a little too much for anything but the boundless energy and insatiable appetite of twenty-one.

The mornings began with sweepstakes upon the day's run, the great excitement of the twenty-four hours. The numbers drawn were separately put up to auction, and those numbers supposed to be nearest the run often went up to a high price. It was not a Dutch auction after the manner of the little Madeira boys with their bouquets—nor was it as picturesque and interesting. But it was quite professionally executed, with nothing amateurish about it, and was often very amusing. Many went in for it with great earnestness—even some of the ladies as well as the men: why not, indeed, in these days of women's rights and men's wrongs? And some were winners, and some of course were losers.

Even from the far-off bridge, one could hear the persuasive tones of the auctioneer rising in excitement as the bidding grew bold for a likely number, finally knocked down amidst applause; only too probably to prove, at twelve o'clock, when the twenty-four hours' run was recorded, eight or ten miles out of the reckoning and a dead loss to its owner. But gains and losses were all taken as matters of indifference, as befitted the owners of gold fields and diamond mines and unlimited fortunes.

When the auction was going on, Mrs. S. would often be sitting beside me, watching the lovely sea, talking of past times, breaking off every now and then to listen to the applause at the other end.

"Poor things!" she would say—a favourite expression of hers: "I am so glad they can find amusement on board. It makes the time pass quickly for them—and that seems to be their chief desire in life. When they get to my age they will find that it passes quickly enough without the help of excitement."

That was quite true; but we must all live our experiences.

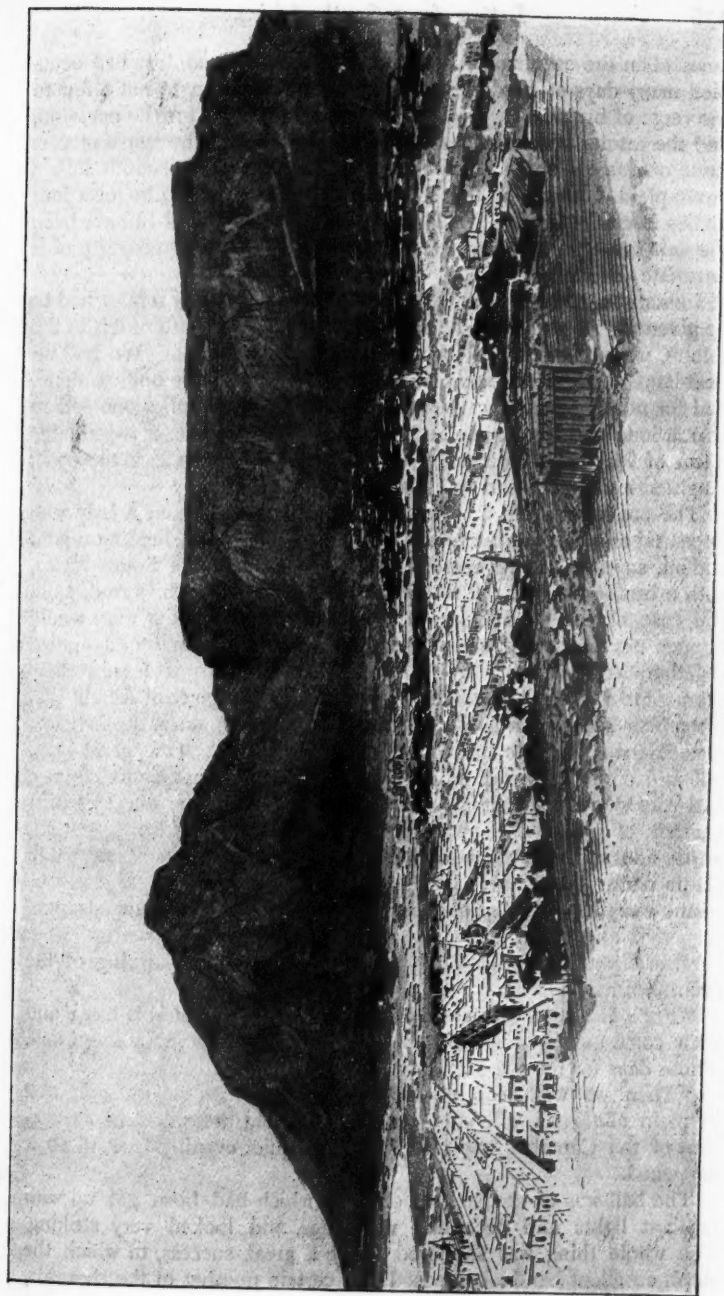
There was nothing to be seen about us but a wide waste of calm waters; the magnificent ocean; some days blue, more often green. Far as the eye could reach, nothing but water, ever undergoing a sea-change, on which the sun poured his intense rays. Day after day the sky would be absolutely cloudless. There were no birds of the air to disturb the vision, but all around us were myriads of flying-fish, flying a foot or two above the waters, then darting in to the luxury of their cool depths: beautiful little creatures with thin gauzy wings that seemed to shine out with all the colours of the rainbow; curious links in creation between the elements. Small whales we occasionally saw; now and then a dolphin; in certain waters, the beautiful nautilus, floating along with its sail set, looking far too fragile and ethereal to be an inhabitant of the wide ocean.

One day H. and I, happening to be looking over the sides, discovered a swordfish: an object so rare that Captain Robinson declared he had only seen one twice in all his experience. No one else chanced to be looking, and no one else saw it; and some thought we must have dreamed the vision, and others wanted the Captain to put back in search of the curiosity. It was certainly a beautiful and a strange creature. Their strength is extraordinary; many weigh as much as three hundred pounds; and they have been known to dig their swords many inches into a ship's side, making a hole sufficient to send her down if they withdrew it. But as a rule it breaks, with very much the sensation, one would suppose, of tooth-drawing, and they depart shorn of their weapon, which, unlike a lobster's claw, does not grow again. Whether it is their death-blow, like the sting of the bee, I cannot tell you.

Mrs. S. delighted in the flying-fish, as she delighted in all things beautiful, and would quite regret the days on which they did not show themselves. For they had their caprices like the rest of creation—fish, flesh, fowl, and good red herring.

The concerts were not a great success, for the musical talent on board was not of a high order; but there are voyages when the celebrities are in sufficient numbers to form very delightful evenings.

Perhaps the great event of the voyage under discussion was the fancy-dress ball, given when we were passing through the tropics; and the condition of collars and starched materials and Christy Minstrel



CAPE TOWN.

faces when the evening was over is not to be described. It had occupied many days of hard work and thought, and brought not a few to the verge of brain-fever. No one had come provided for the occasion, and the results were miracles of ingenuity. One of the ship's officers came out as a Scotch chief, having turned a red table-cloth into a tartan-plaid, buckled at the shoulder by an immense cairngorm four inches in circumference, which many on board supposed to have been the last great diamond from the Kimberley mines, the property of a fortunate passenger.

Invitations had gone out from Father Neptune, and replies had to be given in rhyme, all to be read out on a certain afternoon in the saloon, when the ball had become a thing of the past. We had no poet-laureate on board, any more than just now we have one on shore, and for much the same cause; and in many of the replies one had to search long both for rhyme and reason. But, as the ever memorable Vicar of Wakefield observed, what was wanting in wit was made up in laughter, and so the end was attained.

The presiding deity was Amphitrite, wife of Neptune; a lady who appeared an embodiment of floating clouds of gauze, holding a gold trident, supposed to be symbolical of the gold-fields of South Africa, with a head-dress and ruff of coral à la Queen Elizabeth. And, as in the case of the good Queen, one was always wondering what would happen next, for the gauzy drapery was so cunningly arranged—glued together, as it were, with Portland cement—that one feared every moment to see the whole affair evaporate, leaving in place of Amphitrite, a weeping Niobe or a modern Lady Godiva. Fortunately the invisible fastening was equal to the rough usage it received. One gentleman, tall and stout, appeared as a baby in low neck dress, short sleeves, and very short petticoats; I leave you to imagine the effect; whilst another, of goodly age and weight and grey flowing locks, was his nurse, adorned with poke bonnet, wig, and shawl—a sort of Sarah Gamp performance; very laughable, no doubt, but *tant soi peu outré*—and carrying a bottle, supposed to be filled with something stronger than milk and water.

"Shall you go to-night?" I asked Mrs. S. on the morning of the eventful day.

"For a few minutes," she replied; "just to see what it is like; and then come away. I should feel out of place at a fancy dress ball. Those days for me are over."

"Then we will keep together," I said. "As we are admitted in plain clothes, I will come too. After that we will take possession of the Captain's cabin and spend a quiet evening." And so it happened.

The ball was of course held on deck which had been got up with brilliant lights and decorated with flags, and looked very striking. The whole thing was supposed to be a great success, to which the ship's excellent band: composed of a certain number of the stewards,



GOVERNMENT AVENUE.

who were also good musicians : added its full share. The refreshments down-stairs were extremely popular, especially Buszard's ices, which had been brought out from England and had reposed in the ice-room for the occasion. Certainly, ices are not out of place in the tropics.

One night, between one and two in the morning, Captain Robinson came to our deck cabin and roused us out to have a look at Teneriffe as we passed it.

The night was glorious ; stars flashed in the dark blue heavens, and all the great constellations were visible : the Northern Crown, Southern Cross, Scorpion, and others. Not far off, in the darkness, rose in dim outlines the peak of Teneriffe, slightly veiled in mist. Nothing could have been more beautiful and poetical, more strangely solemn, in the utter stillness and repose of night. The outline, sloping upwards on either side to a point, was almost as perfect as if fashioned geometrically. Nothing disturbed its quiet ; no sound, no visible moving object. As a beautiful dream it appeared, and as a dream it vanished. The stars and the water, the immense wide space melting away in the darkness, the whole beauty of night, enveloped everything in majesty and mystery.

So the days passed easily and pleasantly, and the voyage came to an end, as you have already heard : and the passengers separated and went their several ways.

That first night we landed for a short walk and a first impression of Cape Town under the stars. As far as one could judge, it looked very colonial and very new, though some of it is old enough. But you must not imagine it possesses in the least degree any of the beauty of age and architecture, of form and outline, one meets with in ancient Europe. Of this you had warned me, but without warning one knew what to look for in a comparatively new country. I never had any illusions about South Africa : and expecting little, shall not be disappointed. Indeed, already a few things have proved an agreeable surprise.

That first night we found the principal streets wide, as they always are in places where space is no object ; a contrast in this one particular to the narrow streets of Cairo we trod together. But they were rough and uneven, and we plunged about occasionally, as people do when coming off a sea voyage : only here the reason lay in the roads, not in the sea. Everything of course was closed, as became an hour approaching midnight ; streets were deserted, few lights were visible, all windows were darkened.

At the end of one of the thoroughfares, which had been a gradual ascent, we found the Cathedral : a very ordinary building with little to charm one. Soon after, we came to an avenue : Government Avenue, as it is called : and, unlike the cathedral, it was full of beauty and dignity : wonderful trees, many of which must have been planted by the Dutch settlers two hundred years ago ; noble, magnificent, over-

arching, the stars overhead shining between leaves and branches; not one avenue but many, side by side, like the aisles of a splendid minster; and so lengthy that we thought we should never reach the end.

It was intensely solitary, and we found ourselves almost alone; deep shadows surrounded us, impenetrable gloom and darkness, here and there lightened at long intervals by a flickering lamp. In a new and strange country the effect was peculiar. Behind every tree we fancied an assassin might be lurking, ready for plunder: a descendant of the old Portuguese settlers who came over here ages ago. In such a solitude one might easily be murdered, and the culprit escape to safe quarters. I made some such remark to H.: nine parts fun, one part earnest. "I am armed," he laughed, "for I have my Norwegian dagger. You might run for it, whilst I slayed the assassin. I feel quite equal to the occasion."

And drawing, the blade flashed in a distant lamp light.

But there was no fear of anything of the kind. South Africa knows nothing of such gentlemen as Brazilian ruffians and Greek brigands. The laws of the country are not often broken, and life is safe. In reality the night walk through this avenue was delicious, full of grandeur, repose and beauty.

Presently, nearing the end, we suddenly heard music upon the air.

Then we came out upon a long upper road, the slopes in front of us apparently adorned with gardens and houses, habitations of the people of Cape Town. Here and there a late light gleamed in a window, but for the most part the houses shone out dark and white, closed and quiet in sleep. Beyond all rose the huge mountains, looking, in the mystery of night, threatening and ominous, with exaggerated outlines and impenetrable depths.

Down the long road came the music, which sounded like the twang of a mandolin. It was well played and there was a certain sweetness about it, but it rather disturbed the sacred midnight silence. Nearer and nearer it came, and then out of the darkness loomed some fifteen or twenty sturdy young men, marching, singing, careless, headed by the player. It looked a little like the end of an orgie devoted to Bacchus, and some had twined wreaths of hops, or something that looked like them, round their brigand-shaped hats.

As they passed they turned and seemed to wonder if we would not swell the procession. We let them get fairly ahead, the music stealing upon the night air more and more faintly; and then, out of respect to the small hours, retraced our steps down the solemn and beautiful avenues: gradually making our way back to the *Dunottar*, all the shipping in the harbour, and its forests of masts, standing out clearly against the night sky.

The *Dunottar* was in respectable repose. Every one had retired who could do so. The vessel seemed empty and deserted. One felt that a great crowd had departed, and cabin after cabin was now silent

and vacant. Only those remained on board who are bound for the ports of the coast: Port Elizabeth, East London, or Durban. Of such are we.

The next morning our first daylight experience of Cape Town began unfortunately. A sky overcast, mountains half buried in cloudland, the water in the harbour cold and grey. Before long rain came down with steady determination. We had arranged to take the Victoria drive round the mountain, but this was no longer possible. Even England could not show more unpleasant weather.

We went forth all the same, wondering for whose benefit this ill wind was blowing; certainly not for ours. If Cape Town had not looked specially attractive last night, it looked less so to-day. To the natives the weather seemed to make no difference; these bad days come so rarely that they consider them a pleasant change—just as we feel about a summer day in March. They splashed about and hurried to and fro, and every one seemed in excellent humour. There is something in the air of South Africa which promotes amiability. But the roads not being macadamised, their state may be imagined: many were difficult to cross, and some could not be crossed at all.

That morning we had said good-bye to Mrs. S., whose friends had come down to take possession of her until the Thursday evening, when the one weekly express train started for the distant towns of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. As she sat in the carriage, and leaned forward with her fair, pale, beautiful face, wishing us a hundred good-byes, we realised how much her presence on board had added to the pleasure of the voyage: and when she urged us to pay her and her son a visit in that far-away home up the country we promised if possible to do so. In a letter from her son, handed to her on first arriving, he had very kindly pressed us to go and stay with them, adding as an inducement that he would make me more intimately acquainted with Kaffir life and people, their huts, curious ways and customs, than might otherwise be possible.

That we shall be able to pay that visit is doubtful.

The day being unpleasant, we took the "favourable opportunity" of "doing the lions." The principal streets, I have said, show no special feature. Many of the buildings are handsome, but none are of great height, and as the streets are wide, there is a great deal of blue sky to be seen, a usual and charming feature in all colonial towns. Everything also is dwarfed by the magnificent Table Mountain under which Cape Town reposes. This alone would for ever redeem it from the commonplace. The Dutch element and influence are scarcely to be seen anywhere: and those who have heard much of the "Boers," and expect to find any of the quaintness of Holland, with its canals and tree-lined thoroughfares, its gabled houses with overhanging eaves and dormer windows, will be disappointed. The Dutch Reformed Church contains in the clock-



VICTORIA DRIVE.

tower a clock that was sent from Holland, but that is the only Dutch element about it: excepting eight old Dutch Governors, who sleep peacefully in the vaults beneath, surrounded by all the noise and traffic and success of the town they helped to establish.

Near the Cathedral, which as I have said is not by any means artistic, are the new Houses of Parliament: a building large and handsome in its way, whilst the interior is fitted up with a good deal of quiet dignity. Here the affairs of the State are discussed and settled: and the country having a great future before it, we shall gradually hear more and more of the proceedings in the various Parliaments of South Africa. At Cape Town, the House is surrounded by a well-kept garden. Just beyond this is the wonderful avenue we had made friends with in the darkness and repose of midnight. Equally fine and noble were the old oak trees by daylight, but less weird and mysterious. There were no deep shadows, no Portuguese descendants of brigands lurking about, thirsting for life and money also. A smart policeman patrolling up and down, looked reassuring. The Museum and Library are excellent, both containing very fine collections: the Library being especially rich in rare old manuscripts.

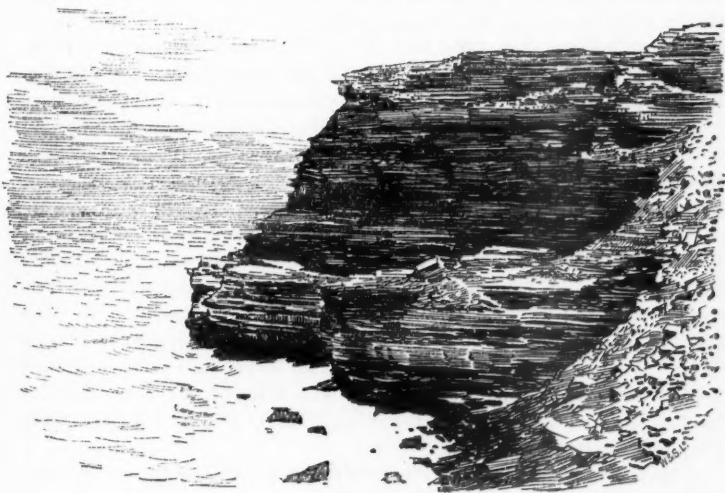
Every one about the streets seemed given up to business and hard work: there were no idlers, though this is not always the rule. Presently we came upon our gallant Captain, who, in spite of the weather, immediately proposed an excursion to the outskirts of Sea Point, where the pleasantest hotel of Cape Town is well situated, and where we might take an artistic luncheon by the sad sea waves. It is a sort of Land's End, and in rough weather the sea breaks and tumbles and dashes over the rocks in splendid fury, the wild birds scream and clang, and the winds of heaven seem to rage from all quarters of the compass at once.

It still rained in torrents, but as there is nothing like action, we at once accepted the proposal. A friendly tram came up at the moment, and we gladly accepted its shelter.

The suburbs are very pretty and picturesque. Small white houses with green shutters, built very much in the style of bungalows, reposing in well-kept gardens full of sweet-scented flowers. For flowers are still a-bloom, though it is the winter of their discontent. But this is quoting Shakespeare, not the people of Cape Town, where I fancy very little discontent finds its way. The roads being wide, the opposite neighbours are not at all inquisitive and interfering. Moreover, in these colonial suburbs neighbours are neighbours in every sense of the word: and probably fraternise with each other as if they were members of one family, drawn together by those bonds of sympathy which weave themselves naturally under alien skies. Not that some of these people have known any other skies, but the greater part talk English, and the true home of English seems to be England.

The tram stopped about a hundred yards or so from the hotel, and of course the rain at that moment was coming down at its worst. But no sooner had we all three arrived under shelter than the rain ceased and the clouds broke, Nature put on smiles and tears, and looked either very penitent for sin, or very sad for sorrow. Whatever it might be we rejoiced in the change.

The hotel facing the sea, was magnificent in situation, but rather unpleasantly crowded, as it generally is when a vessel comes in from England; yet the attentive landlady and her son did all in their power to make our short visit agreeable. Presently, with sunshine and flying clouds overhead, and smiles and tears about our path, we went down to the edge of the rocks, and in the clear green water



DURING THE VICTORIA DRIVE.

found wonderful sea anemones of rare beauty and colour: a perfect aquarium of marvels. The rocks were rugged and picturesque, and far down to the left we traced the outlines of the broken magnificent coast of South Africa, which has scarcely its equal, gradually rising from the sea to the very summit of towering Table Mountain. After a quiet hour amongst the anemones, we returned to the town by the small railway which runs along the seashore and shows up every curve and change of the coast to perfection; the clear green water plashing upon the sand, rolling up in long lines of white foam, and rolling back upon itself; until pier and harbour came into view and the journey was over.

In spite of the rain our first day in South Africa had not been an unpleasant experience.

When we returned to the *Dunottar*, the great process of coaling was going on, the horrors of which can be better imagined than described.

The next day was bright even for a Cape day, and we decided to make hay whilst the sun shone. Captain Robinson had made every necessary arrangement in ordering a fashionable Cape conveyance in the form of a small wagonette; the stewards had packed up a sumptuous luncheon sufficient for three times three, and we started with fair wind and weather for the famous Victoria drive.

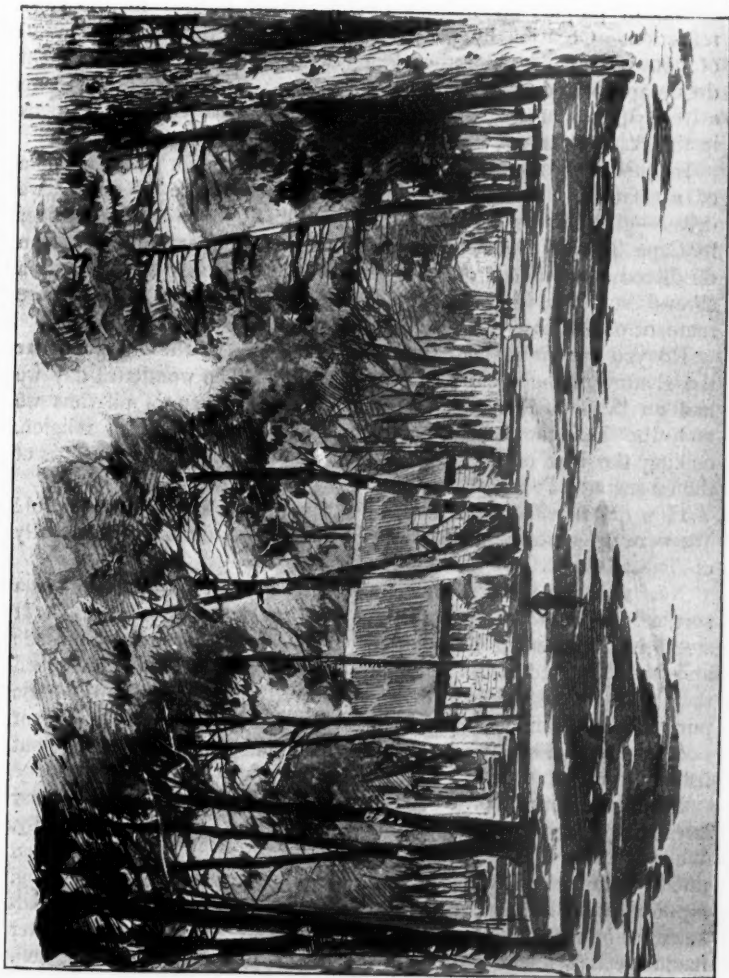
On each side of Table Mountain is another mountain: one to the left called the Devil's Peak, one to the right the Lion's Head. These form a mass of extraordinary magnificence. Table Mountain rises to a height of 4000 feet, whilst the straight line of the summit, whence its name, is traced for a length of two miles. The Devil's Peak rises 3300 feet, the Lion's Head 2000 feet. Table Mountain is almost precipitous, and almost unrivalled; a huge wall of barren rock; yet easily ascended from certain points. The only danger arises from the sudden downfall of clouds, which frequently happens; and then, unless accompanied by a guide, it is wisest to remain stationary until the clouds lift again: an unpleasant and uncertain waiting.

The drive is very long, and the sun intensely hot. If this was winter, we wondered what summer could be like. But it really is autumn, and not winter, though one sees few of the autumn tints which make an English autumn so beautiful. Vegetation is of a different nature: there is no "lingering in death." We went out by Sea Point, which we had seen yesterday all smiles and tears, and were glad to see again to-day all sunshine. The suburbs, too, looked better for the change, and one felt that life in many a house we saw must pass very pleasantly.

Leaving Cape Town and its suburbs well behind us, we entered upon one of the most wonderful drives in the world: a drive of inconceivable beauty and grandeur from beginning to end.

For some six or seven hours we revelled in a succession of scenes that alone are worth a voyage to South Africa. The road to begin with is well placed on the mountain side, high above the ocean. Nothing can be finer than the line of coast, with its bold, magnificent rocks, over which the waves for ever surge and break. Point after point stretching out into a succession of lovely bays, and the sea to-day rolled over the white sand with a soothing, sleepy murmur: the most wonderfully green, transparent water imaginable. Not more lovely the waters of the Mediterranean which you have watched beating against the classic shores of Alexandria: not more lovely the waters which flow upwards to the mouth of your beloved Golden Horn.

To our left rose the towering mountains; the Lion's Head and "Twelve Apostles" ever in sight. The latter are twelve peaks of curious shape running side by side, and standing out in sharp outline



A SUBURB OF CAPE TOWN.

against the brilliant sky. The slopes up to a certain height were covered with rich verdure. Ravines and precipices abounded. The calm ocean to our right stretched far as the eye could reach; dazzling and transparent, blue and green, with here and there deep streaks of purple: all flashing out a myriad gleams in the sun's reflection. Occasionally we passed a fishing settlement: a handful of houses perched upon the slopes, with an inn where one might dream away the days of a delicious summer; a primitive church with a lych gate announcing that the people are not by any means heathens in this far-away land.

In one of these silvery bays we came to an anchor: and a smile of satisfaction passed over the copper-coloured face of our native driver—given to us because he was supposed to be the best driver in Cape Town. The smile was due to the fact that he was a man of discernment, and from the size of the luncheon-basket, had a shrewd suspicion that he would come in for more than a mere remnant of the feast.

Do you remember our luncheon that day in the desert under the shadow of the Greater Petrified Desert? The wonderful day we had on those little Arabian horses? The caravan of pilgrims we met who had come from Jedda, combining business with religion, making the best of both worlds as it were, according to the laws of the far-seeing "Prophet"?

How different the scene to-day! and yet of its kind how beautiful! We were not quite isolated; signs of life were about us, if not exactly of civilisation.

Near us was a small settlement consisting of a house which was a sort of inn, in which people may find rough accommodation. It stood in a neglected bear-garden, where buckets of water reposed; and fowls fluttered in the water, and a dog or two and a cat quenched their thirst, after which it evidently served the house for domestic purposes. Of human beings one saw no sign excepting in a distant boat in the offing, where a couple of men were throwing out fishing-nets.

Near this house was a black-looking tent, exactly like one of our large English gipsy-tents, evidently the abode of some happy family. We ourselves were on the pure white sand, and the water rippled up to within forty yards of us, green, transparent and inviting. Nothing could be seen of the settlement without going round a sand-bank. Some distance up the green slopes we found a shady bower made specially for us, where we were sheltered from the burning sun. Here we encamped, and Jeremiah, our driver—who certainly was misnamed, for he could never have been given to lamentation—was proud to bring up the hamper, spread the cloth, and then, like a wise servant, return to his horses and his sands until such time as he might be called to do justice to his "reversionary interest."

We thought ourselves safe from the world. Settlement and gipsy

tent might have been a hundred miles away. The men in the offing had thrown out their nets and disappeared round the point.

But presently our privacy was suddenly intruded upon by a woman, who seemed to spring out of the earth, and came boldly begging, not for humble remnants but for a share of the feast. Also might she bring us water and boil us a kettle: though it would have puzzled an oracle to know what to do with boiling water in this heated atmosphere. Well provided with everything, we sent her away loaded with trophies. But she was an avaricious woman, for presently we found her playing her arts and wiles upon the amiable Jeremiah, and were just in time to prevent his soft heart from depriving himself of all his reversionary property to this importunate syren—whom we threatened with vengeance if she did not at once disappear for ever. She slowly departed muttering something about “hungry children, hard times, and no money.” You see, human nature is the same even in the backwoods of South Africa. We came down upon Jeremiah for his generosity.

“Me know her, sir,” he said. “Always see her here, always same beggar woman, always same story. Got evil eye upon her. Me fall sick no give her anything.”

But he evidently believed nothing of the sort: it was only his weak good nature.

When we packed up and departed, the gipsy woman standing afar off was impudent enough to wave a handkerchief, the exact complexion of her tent, by way of farewell. Possibly it was meant for Jeremiah, but as he had no eyes in the back of his head it was love’s labour lost as far as he was concerned.

Soon after this we left the magnificent sea coast and turned inland: exchanging one grandeur for another. To us it was even more striking. The beautiful sea is more or less the same everywhere, but we were now sweeping amidst gigantic hills and valleys overwhelming in their extent and magnificence.

The mountain tops were wild and barren, but lower down vegetation was luxuriant. These valleys are some of the most fertile in all South Africa, and yield some of the best fruit. We passed many a rich and cultivated orchard, and every now and then came to a lonely farm-house reposing amidst all this wild wealth of Nature, where life, whatever its inmates may think, is a paradise. Probably to them its beauty lies in the abundant fertility of its ground—only another emblem of paradise. Those Boers to whom we spoke were quiet and friendly, and if we had proposed putting up in any one of them, I think we should have found a welcome.

Hills and outlines were wonderfully fine and apparently unending. Trees and shrubs flourished in abundance, amidst a profusion of undergrowth; and the silver tree was very conspicuous. We had never seen one before, and were much struck with its beauty. The tree is not large, but it is quite different from any other. Its leaves

shine out like silver, and when closely examined look like the softest and most brilliant silk plush: thin pointed leaves of delicate shape.

Jeremiah, seeing our admiration, stopped his chariot, which he commanded like another Cæsar, and disappearing into the plantation, brought back a trophy in the shape of an enormous branch under whose shadow we might have reposed. The effect upon the cavalcade was no doubt magnificent, but made one feel rather like tourists out for a holiday.

It would be impossible to do justice to the wonders of this drive: the variety of the hills and their ever-changing outlines as we turned to right or left: the amazing extent and breadth of the slopes, many of them purple with a lovely heather. The tone of the landscape was also exquisite, the distant hills surrounded by a purple atmosphere, whilst the clear light air was more exhilarating than champagne. We envied the few inhabitants of these matchless valleys, where every season must have its own special and perfect beauty.

Presently, after a steep ascent, we came to a spot considered to be the crowning glory of the drive. Here the mountains were wild and rocky, but far down, stretched wide plains laden with fruit-trees and vines, all the riches of the earth; and beyond all, the deep blue sea shimmered in the sunshine. We had made a complete half circle, and were now in the region of the Devil's Peak, and the other side of the water: approaching the most cultivated and richest portion of the neighbourhood: the famous vineyards of Constantia, which make the celebrated wine that goes to all parts of the world. Only this one little nook in all South Africa yields the grape necessary for the wine. A little earlier in the season we could have loaded ourselves with enormous bunches of luscious fruit, much of it with an exquisite muscatel flavour, for a very trifling consideration; but now all was over. The vineyards were empty, the wine-presses yet warm and red. Autumn was passing on to winter: the richness of the many harvests of fruit and flower and grain was past; pruning-hooks had given place to ploughshares.

Very soon we lost the fine expanse of hills and valleys, and heather breathing air, and came into regions of life and civilisation; the suburbs of Cape Town, where charming houses are surrounded by gardens full of tropical vegetation: the great mountain rising behind, and giving to this spot the temperature of Madeira—and something of its relaxing atmosphere.

For it must be admitted that the capital of South Africa is by no means its healthiest region. For health you must go into the Karroo country, whose delights can only be realised by those who know them. Cape Town is almost on a level with the sea: but far away you may reach towns and settlements six thousand feet above it, where the bright, rarefied air often restores life and hope to the most shattered health.

We passed under trees, magnificent as those of Government Avenue, that must have been equally planted by the old Dutch settlers of long ago. There were many signs of wealth—the new-born wealth of South Africa, though Cape Town itself has been rich and prosperous from days of old. Turning out of our way into a lovely rustic lane, we called upon a friend who lived in a tiny house adorned with a mixture of English and South African trophies and reminiscences. This good Samaritan gave us tea, beyond all doubt the most delicious ever ministered by fairy fingers: and her equipage was prepared for



OLD DUTCH HOUSE IN VICTORIA DRIVE.

unlimited supplies. Her husband had lately gone up into one of the wildest parts of the country, and with much humour she described his adventures. Robinson Crusoe at his worst was never more isolated. As he was likely to remain there for some time, she was about to join him, and the little home in which we were being so well treated would soon know her no more.

It often requires a good deal of courage to face the vicissitudes of life, which come to many out here in the form of abundant surprises; of a good deal of loneliness and solitude; of much roughing

and making the best of very hard lines. And to some women who have gone out bravely from a refined English home, where comfort and luxury come in the general ordering of things, the transition must often be trying. But a certain talisman who works wonders and gilds the roughest passages of existence, throws sunshine upon the most gloomy scenes: and for the sake of "one love in a life" women will go through a martyrdom of hardships: even enjoy them: the self-denying part of humanity, which puts to shame the sterner element.

In the neighbourhood of Cape Town, however, there are no hardships. Life passes pleasantly and luxuriously; there is plenty of society, and it is less stiff and formal than that of the mother country; though even in England stiffness and formality are becoming more and more a tradition. And Cape Town is not so very far away, so that amongst those who are able to afford the leisure and the expense, there is the excitement of an occasional visit to the old home: travelling made easy in this *Dunottar Castle* age.

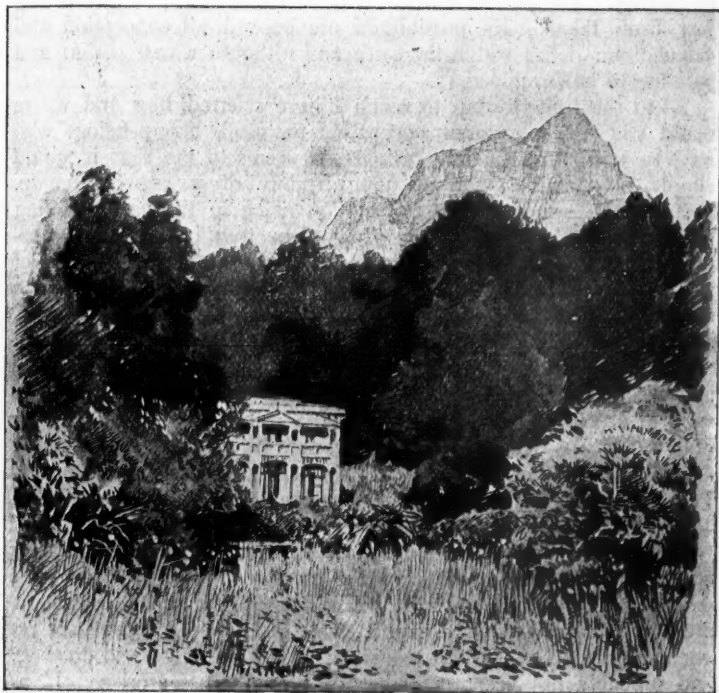
It was a pleasant conclusion to a memorable day, this five o'clock tea-gathering under the shadow of Table Mountain. Jeremiah brought us back in triumph and departed a happier and a richer man: perhaps to bestow his *douceur* upon the first case of distress, real or fictitious, he might fall in with. In softness of heart he seemed nothing but a grown-up child; yet shrewd enough in his way, and certainly a famous whip.

"Take you again to-morrow, sir?" he asked anxiously, touching his cap generally. "Very happy, sir, take you other fine drive, with fine lunch-basket. Fine day certain, sir. No more bad days in Cape Town like yesterday. Weather made a mistake, sir; no more mistakes."

We would willingly have obliged him, but in the first place there were other objects in view for the morrow; and secondly, we could never again equal the drive we had just taken. It makes one's first impressions of the country in the way of scenery almost overwhelming; but from all I hear we shall see very little more that will at all come up to it in beauty and grandeur.

In summer-time when all vegetation is in full bloom: wild flowers and heather and flowering trees with all their abundant foliage; when all the vines are laden with clusters of rich fruit, that hang in luscious green and purple bunches, and are so amazingly plentiful that you may enjoy a surfeit of them for a very small coin: at such times one realises what a favoured land is South Africa; how rich in resources; what a field for industry; what a country for emigration; what a future awaits the superfluous population of other lands; what a refuge for the "unemployed" of England when the people of our little island have increased and multiplied beyond all limits, and by their wisdom have driven most of its trade and prosperity into any part of the world but its own. That day will come.

And as I looked upon those wonderfully fertile plains and valleys of the Victoria Drive it seemed to me that one of the great industries of the future in South Africa must and will be fruit-growing. This amazingly beautiful and productive land has not been given to lie fallow. The day will come when we shall see vast vineyards and orchards covering the country and flourishing like green bay trees : and those who are first in the field will reap the richest harvest. Everything is in its favour. Climate, which is a most important



ON OUR WAY HOME.

consideration ; for many men are like trees and will not always bear transplanting. Where malaria reigns an Englishman too often falls victim to it ; where brigands lurk he is sure to get into mischief, which often ends in being shot down. Many of us have had friends who have gone out to these doubtful countries, to be heard of no more ; until the sickness of hope deferred has passed into the sorrow of resigned certainty.

But in South Africa there is nothing of all this ; no "daylight ghosts" stalk about in search of prey. Every man may live in

health and safety, and it is very much his own fault if wealth and prosperity do not follow. Her very closeness to England, the centre of civilisation towards which the whole world still radiates, is in her favour. In these days of progress, it seems hardly too much to think that by and by vessels will make the voyage in ten days, for there is no end to man's invention. Even *your* magic will have to retire before the every-day magic of the coming world.

But all this is not quite yet. As we have said, South Africa is in its infancy. Imagine for a moment the resources of the land that has just been taken. Its possibilities are beyond all conception and calculation : riches within the earth and without : a vast garden and paradise to be developed.

As to the fruit-growing, to which I have referred, how and where could you find pleasanter occupation for those happy beings who have to work for their daily bread? It seems to me that it would simply be Arcadia, with all the certainty of a known climate. Imagine the owner of a vast plantation rising in the early morning and riding forth to survey his boundless fruit crops, giving employment to an army of happy and industrious hands. Think of the "painted skies" of sunrise, with all their glow and glory; the delicious air which seems to breathe into one health and happiness, and "a divine contentment;" think of the mere beauty of the scene : the fruit-laden trees, the vine-clad plains, all suggestive of prosperity and wealth at the outlay of a very moderate capital. It is almost a work in which only refined and educated men ought to embark, for only they could rightly feel and appreciate its charm. And depend upon it all this will come. One sees it as distinctly as if revealed. Probably a very few years will find the country revolutionised—I had almost said idealised.

Beyond this there is the more prosy but not less tangible industry opening up the mining wealth of the country. If it has made such strides in a very few years, what will it not make in say the course of the next twenty years, fifty years? This is beyond imagination; no one can pretend to fathom the question. Time alone will do that : and probably not years or scores of years, but centuries. If in primitive days the Phœnicians came over to our little island and opened up tin mines which are still working, what is not possible, and what may not be expected from so vast a country as South Africa?

One becomes lost in dreams and speculations of an unparalleled future, and results that are limitless. Here at last we find the country of Aladdin, without the aid of his lamp. Down below are rich gardens in which grow trees with jewels for fruit—just as Aladdin saw them. We have only to pluck and enjoy the harvests that have been waiting there for untold ages : riches to which King Solomon's mines were as nothing.

And what we now know and see is probably nothing to that which shall be. From the Creation of the world, Africa—whether North South, East or West, it matters not—seems to have been a country marked out for special favour and prosperity: all the gorgeousness and pageantry of the East, corresponding to the wealth of nations which flowed into it, from the days of Mene the Egyptian monarch and the mighty Pharaohs—to take only that one little section of the great continent—down to the comparatively recent times of the Mamelukes and their betrayers: and who shall say that Southern Africa is not destined to be greater and richer than any portion of Africa, or any time, that has gone before? A few realise what South Africa is capable of: many have confidence in her future; but no one really conceives how great that future will become. It has suddenly opened up and developed, making gigantic strides in an incredibly short time; and these wonderful possibilities have not been given, or these discoveries made, merely to lead to the Dead Sea fruit of disappointment. This has not been one's experience of the government and development of the world in the past, and, like the learned Dr. Butler, we may all judge by analogy.

I have alluded to things on the earth and things under the earth, but that night, after our wonderful drive, we were favoured with a contemplation of things above the earth.

We paid a visit to the world-famed Observatory which lies in a suburb of Cape Town. There, for an hour or two, all its resources were placed at our disposal; and we saw and heard much that we had never seen or heard before. With the help of their splendid appliances, new worlds passed before us. We seemed to come into touch with the far-off firmament. Mars just then was bright and beautiful; our minds reverted to the correspondence that had filled the papers and occupied men's thoughts. We looked for a signal flash, but it came not; we tried the effect of thought transference, but the planet would not respond; perhaps it was too distant: perhaps, in spite of Goethe, mind does not influence mind unconsciously. For a time we were above the world, soaring, whether in the body or out of the body I hardly know, into unknown regions of eternal space. Stars and constellations moved before us; the grandest train, the most majestic procession ever seen. As we gazed we held our breath, as in presence of the everlasting mysteries of creation; at the very threshold of that Heaven of Heavens wherein dwelleth Righteousness. A little more and we should penetrate beyond the veil; the heavens would open to the glories of the Unseen. But they did not. It was good for us that all longing and aspiration should be unsatisfied. We had no right to ask for a sign; and the great curtain of the sky remained impenetrable. We listened for the music of the spheres but we did not hear it. Eternal silence, space, darkness; nothing more.

Yet when all passed away and we came back to earth, our eyes

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were dazzled for a moment, as by a light celestial; we felt that we had touched the very fringe of the Borderland; and we had heard floating through space, how or where we know not, words written of old: He knoweth the number of the stars, and telleth them all by their names: The heavens and the earth are full of His Glory: He saw everything that He had made and behold it was very good.



I DO NOT LOVE.

I do not love, yet there are days
When, if I hear a footstep come,
My heart will beat;
When with bent ear and dreamy gaze,
For what I know not, nor for whom,
I sit and wait.

I do not love, but there are nights
When my soul melts in thoughts so sweet
I cannot sleep;
When my heart throngs with vague delights,
That with vague sorrows blend and meet,
Until I weep.

I do not love, but morns there are
That in my soul a sunshine make,
And seem to say,
Thy life will boast another star,
A loved and unknown voice shall wake
Thy heart to-day.

Alas! that blest mood may not last,
Though step should come I heed it not;
Cold grows my heart.
Love, dost thou come and go so fast?
And art thou, love, as soon forgot,
As cold depart?

JULIA KAVANAGH.

THE SKIPPER'S TREASURE.

THIS is my best—in fact, my only story of personal adventure, and

I have felt it somewhat of a hardship not to be allowed to tell it sooner ; but, as the reader will observe, I am not the sole proprietor. There is another man concerned, and it is in deference to his feelings that I have kept it to myself so long, that I almost fear some of the flavour may have gone off in the keeping.

For instance, how in these later days : when the swarming cyclist covers the length and breadth of a country or so in a Bank holiday run ; when for his use and behoof this little island of ours has been surveyed, and measured, and mapped, till every square inch has been accounted for : how can I make any one enter into the spirit of wild adventure that nerved me, a City clerk, to start on a fortnight's walking tour through a little known region of England (precise locality suppressed by desire of the other man)—how can I make it seem possible to get lost as I was lost, or to find what I found ?

I can but try.

The losing was a simple business. A dusty highroad crowded with flocks of sheep on their way to the market town ; a tempting, bowery, grass-grown bye-lane ; a flagrant misdirection by a civil-spoken rustic impostor ; and a mile or two of tramp, ending on the open down, with a sea-mist rising and thickening every minute ;—there you have it.

"The road must lead to somewhere," said I, and tramped on.

It did. To a cluster of deserted, insolvent-looking farm-buildings, with tumbledown stables and sheds plastered over with auctioneer's bills about "Live and dead stock," to be sold on some long past day.

Then the road became a cart-track, and the cart-track stopped at a gate and went on as a footpath ; while all the time the down rose higher and higher, the white mist drifted and curled round me, and the sound of the sea grew nearer and nearer.

I blundered off the path, and on to a sheep-track, somehow, and then stuck to that in sheer despair of doing anything else ; in my cockney ignorance imagining that a sheep-track must necessarily end in something—a farm, a shepherd's hut may be, or perhaps only a trough or a turnip-cutter. So I stumbled blindly forward till a sudden gust of wind from the sea swept up and eddied round me, tearing the mist-shroud into tatters and driving it landwards, and I stopped short with a catch in my breath, and a sickening qualm, within two steps of sudden death.

The cliff edge was within a few inches of me, and St. Barr's church and village a hundred feet below.

The down was cloven by a mighty gash, the sea-level reaching far inland. As I stood, giddy and breathless, the fresh wind from the

sea blew in my face, and steadied my nerves, and the last rag of mist floated melting away from beneath me. I made out first a little grey church with a ruined tower standing on the opposite side of the cleft under the shelter of the cliff; then a tiny bay with a beach of yellow shingle, a cluster of fishermen's huts, boats drawn up near a rough wooden pier, and immediately below me more cottages with lights twinkling in their windows; for, though I stood in the yellow glow of evening, day was already done in the depths below.

This brought home to me the consideration of what was to be done next.

What choice had I? To turn back? Too disgusting an idea to entertain for a moment. To the left? Over the cliff edge into the sea. To the right? Inland over the down, where I might strike the lost high-road—or I might not: a much stronger probability. Straight forward? Well, why not?

I crept cautiously to the edge and peered over. A narrow path zigzagged up the face of the cliff to within about forty feet of the top, broken off apparently by some landslip. At one point some well-established gorse bushes seemed to offer assistance. Still it was an ugly descent. The light was waning, the footing insecure; a clod of earth which I touched with my stick went crashing down into the darkness with a cataract of earth and stones following it. The longer I looked at the job the less I liked it; so I looked no longer, but, as the sun was setting with inconvenient rapidity, over I went while light remained to me.

I reached the bottom at last with scratched hands and face and a torn coat, and found that the last turn of the path had brought me out on the beach. The fishermen's huts seemed deserted, so I ploughed my way through the shingle across to the old church.

It stood almost on the level of the shore, grey, ruined and weather-beaten, with scanty trails of ivy drooping in tangles round it, looking like a sea-weed-draped boulder rather bigger than the rest. Its low tumbledown wall was still of service to its parishioners as a popular lounge. About a score of blue-jerseyed figures were leaning up against it, or perched on the top, smoking, looking out to sea, or exchanging brief remarks on me and my movements. They were a fine-looking set of fellows, with a strong family likeness amongst them. They represented the entire able-bodied male population of the place, and were all, as I afterwards discovered, near relations.

I accosted the nearest, and all the rest drifted up and stood around, gravely staring at me with an air of amiable mistrust. I was evidently a novelty, and perhaps not a satisfactory one. When I asked a question, one looked at another with slow interrogation, and the answer came in a soft drawl from anybody but the one I addressed. "What was the name of this place?" "St. Barr's, for shew-er." "Where was the nearest town?" "Why, Starmouth, over yonder." "How could I get there?" I learnt that Ben Kimber's boat might or

mightn't be going round to-morrow, and Ben might or mightn't give me a passage—they are a cautious folk in St. Barr's. "Was there a road?" This was a poser. After much searching of mind and head-shaking and private discussion as to where the carrier due on Tuesday week was likely to hail from, my new acquaintances gave up the problem. "Was there any inn at which I could get supper and bed?" "There was the Hand and Heart." And with one accord the whole assembly put itself in motion to show me the way to it.

The whole assembly, with one exception.

One man alone had paid no attention to me, but had sat on the wall stolidly smoking, his elbows on his knees, his chin in his hands, and his hat pulled well down over his nose. His indifference drew my attention to him, or perhaps it was the whiff of tobacco I caught in passing—uncommonly good stuff for a St. Barr's fisherman to smoke. Anyhow I stared hard into his face, and caught a look that made me start and go on my way deeply exercised by what I had seen.

It was the other man, as you guess of course.

The Hand and Heart was not in the habit of receiving guests for the night, but promised to see what it could do for me. It was too dark to explore the village while my supper was being prepared, so I made my way back to the beach, where with much shouting and hauling and grinding of shingle the boats were going out, carrying every man in the place with them out a-fishing.

Again, with one exception. I didn't see the other man amongst them.

After a supper of fried fish and pickled pork, I was shown my room: a sort of back kitchen with a newly-scoured brick floor and a door opening out on the road. Strings of onions, dried fish, and odds and ends of household gear hung from the rafters; there was a heap of nets at one end, and the pickled pork had come out of a barrel in the corner.

However, the truckle-bed with its patchwork counterpane was clean, a glorious fire of drift-wood was drying up the floor, and provision for the night's requirements stood on the table in the shape of a spirit bottle and tumbler, while a big kettle sang on the hob. I shut myself in, well content, filled and lighted my pipe, and settled down for a quiet half-hour over the fire before turning in.

I was roused by a tapping on the window, soft but imperative.

I pushed aside the checked curtain and saw in the bright moonlight that my visitor was the other man, my partner in this story, to whom for convenience sake I must now put a name.

He was Mr. Marcus Goring, a gentleman whom I had many a time ushered deferentially in or out of the private office at our place in the City, and whom I, with the rest of the clerks, regarded with much respect and admiration. The respect was for his position as the nephew of a big firm with whom we did considerable business, the admiration was for his manner, his air, the cut of his clothes, which seemed to bring a perfume of the West End amongst us

But that was in the City. Mr. Marcus Goring, as he appeared that night when I noiselessly unbolted the door in response to his signal, and he slouched in in his big fisherman's boots with a sou'wester over his eyes and a stubbly-bearded chin, did not command admiration; and I forgot to be deferential either, and saluted him with "Hullo, what's up?"

"Good evening, Heritage," he said in his customary off-hand condescending tone, that went very well with a tall hat and a gardenia in his button-hole, but was out of place in my back-kitchen, I felt. "You recognised me just now I saw, but you kept it to yourself."

"It was none of my business," I answered indifferently; "you need not be afraid I shall mention it at the office. Won't you sit down?"

"I was rather disgusted to see you dropping from the skies into the midst of us, do you know?" he went on smiling affably. "But I begin to think we may make the meeting profitable. How long can you stay?"

"Till I can find my way out to-morrow."

"Leave's up, eh?"

"It will be by the time I get back to town."

"Telegraph for extension. Mention my name."

"Thanks, I'd rather not. It wouldn't suit my engagements. It's not every day that a poor little clerk gets a chance of a bit of swagger." He looked infinitely astonished, then he laughed.

"I suppose you have some doubts about my business here. My appearance is not calculated to inspire confidence I admit." He stretched out a dingy blue leg and looked at it consideringly. "I'm here on a queer errand. I wonder if I can trust you?"

"I wouldn't if I were you," I answered him. "Personally, I should much prefer that you did not."

"But I must. I want you to help me, don't you see. If you had been decently obliging in the first instance, I needn't have let you know more than I chose. As it is——"

I pushed the whiskey over to him and composed myself to listen. He mixed and meditated a bit, and at last started off.

"There was an old, old nurse about my father's house when I was a boy, who had come into our family somewhere towards the beginning of this century. Molly Kimber was a St. Barr's woman—everyone is a Kimber here who isn't a Guest. It must be more than twenty years since she died—I know I connect her funeral with my first home-coming from Harrow, but when I think of her it seems only the other day that I was sitting on the table in her room threading her needles for her—she was a valiant needlewoman—and rummaging out her work-box; or having tea with lots of hot buttered toast and plum jam while she told me stories of her young days here. Rattling good stories they were too, with a fine sea flavour about them, full of smuggling and scrimmages with coastguards and alarms of French invasion. But the best one of all was about Miss Juliana. I asked for that one over and over again."

I supposed that "the bearing of these observations lay in their application," and waited for enlightenment.

"I was madly in love with Miss Juliana. There was a little water-colour sketch of her in the pocket of the work-box, and I used to gaze fondly on it while Molly discoursed of all the beautiful young creature's charms and accomplishments; how she used to play the harp and guitar, and do tambour-work and make bead-purses and hair-chains, and paint flowers and butterflies on rice paper. Molly had treasured specimens of all these elegant industries except the last, which the mice had got at. She could also dance the shawl dance, and repeat pages and pages of beautiful poetry by heart. Her father was the parson here. I am lodging now in what was the Parsonage, and can show you the very walk where my Juliana wandered in a puce satin gown, with oh, such tiny sandalled shoes, and hair in graceful drooping curls.

"Her head had a graceful droop likewise, and so had the flowers in her slim fingers. The picture hangs framed in my room at home now, and I've looked at it for all these years, never guessing how some day the ghost of pretty Juliana would lure me to the very spot where she lies buried——"

"I see! Going to put her into a novel, and have come down to get up the local colouring."

"Wrong. The idea isn't half a bad one, though. There's splendid material lying ready to hand. Pretty Miss Juliana, with all her boarding-school graces, brought home here to the rough, rollicking, deep-drinking society of St. Barr's in its prosperous days. Those began and ended with the war with France. St. Barr was marked by nature for the headquarters of the 'fair trade.' Look at the bay full of shoals and shallows only known to the fishermen, the narrow road inland which a couple of men could make impassable at an hour's notice, the long stretch of unguarded coast to east and west. The St. Barr's men did a roaring traffic, Molly said; not a wife but had her French silk gown and lace cap; and brandy and guineas were plentiful with the husbands. They had a fine fleet of boats, and a perfect system of signalling—that old iron crow's nest on the church tower had its uses then, and the vaults under the chancel held more than coffins. If you go to Starmouth by road you'll see many a fine farmhouse where carts and horses were always in readiness when the word was given from St. Barr's, and where bales of silk and tobacco have been built up in the hayricks on occasion. I'm afraid Miss Juliana's father was no better than his neighbours—a ne'er-do-weel, pitchforked into the family living as the one place where he could do least mischief. Juliana must have been a girl of spirit, for she kept him sober till service was over on Sundays, wrote his sermons, and even got up a class for reading, writing, and Scripture in the Parsonage kitchen. Molly was one of the prize scholars apparently. Some of the lads used to come just to plague the girls and make a riot, but Dick Lee broke two of their heads and came himself regular to make the others behave."

"Dick Lee is the hero, I presume?"

"Just so. He is neither Guest nor Kimber, you observe, but a foreigner like ourselves. He came into the village, as you did, over the cliff. After a wild night of sleet and snow a gipsy woman was found dead at the foot of the path you came down, half buried in a drift, with a little brown baby rolled up in her red shawl. Molly doesn't know how they arrived at his name—it happened before her time. He grew up in St. Barr's as any little stray pup might have done, getting a kick here and a scrap there, and thriving on the treatment. He was a strong, daring young scamp, the head of all the mischief in the place, till Miss Juliana came home, when he suddenly sobered down to the amazement of all his old comrades, groomed the Vicar's pony, dug the Vicarage garden, kept the kitchen supplied with the best fish of the catch, not to speak of a chance hare now and then or a brace of birds—for Dick was a born poacher—and came to church for three Sundays running with a clean face and a new orange kerchief tied round his neck.

"St. Barr's jeered and jested. Dick defied St. Barr's and stuck to the Sunday school.

"A greater disturbance than usual took place there one day when Ikey Guest, three years older and two stone heavier than Dick, so mauled and maltreated him that the Vicar had to interfere and order both off the premises. Ikey wouldn't budge, but Dick, wiping his injured face, stood up and swore a mighty oath he would never show his face again in St. Barr's till he could come back, with gold lace on his coat and a sword by his side, and marry Miss Juliana! He caught her in his arms, as she stood aghast, snatched a kiss and dashed off into the night. They found afterwards that he had broken into the church and stolen her prayer-book from the Vicarage pew, and they heard of him as being seen at Starmouth on board a man-of-war sailing for the West Indies, and that was all."

"End of Vol. 1," I observed, as Goring stopped to relight his pipe.

"Just so. Now you won't believe what I'm going to tell you, that five or six years after Dick Lee did come back again. St. Barr's awoke one morning to find a schooner at anchor in the bay. In the course of the morning a boat was put off from her and came alongside the pier, and Dick Lee himself stepped ashore in a uniform as smart as gold lace could make it, a cocked hat, and a sword by his side. He swaggered up the village street followed by his boat's crew, looking for all the world like a king coming back to his own country. All the place turned out to welcome him, but he spoke sharp and high, tossed a handful of money to the children who crowded round, and made straight for the Vicarage.

"Molly was Miss Juliana's little maid by this time, learning to dress hair, darn and patch and wait at table; so when Dick was actually asked to dine with the Vicar, you may guess she kept her ears

open. He told wonderful stories of his adventures—speaking quite like a gentleman and talking about the ship as his own and of the prizes she had won. After dinner he and the Vicar sat smoking their pipes together till nearly dusk, and then he went away.

"My word, but Miss Juliana was in a fine flutter that evening when Molly came to brush and curl her hair for the night! He had really come back to marry her, and was to come to-morrow for her father's answer. She sat looking at his ship in the moonlight and said long pieces of poetry to Molly about a 'Corsair' and his bride, but when Molly asked if that were Dick Lee's profession, she sighed and said 'Alas, no!' He was but the owner of a merchantman, carrying 'Letters of marque'—but it strikes me that Molly's guess was not such a bad one. Professions get mixed in war-time.

"Captain Lee came next evening to supper. He brought a sack full of presents with him. Molly talked of golden bowls and flagons, chains and candlesticks, strings of pearls and diamond earrings. She had her share, a necklace of beautifully carved black wood beads alternating with chased gold ones—I think it must have been a rosary—a Spanish lace veil, and sundry odds and ends.

"Miss Juliana sang and played the harp to her corsair after supper, blushing as red as a rose while he leaned over her chair and made hot love to her, the Vicar feebly protesting.

"At last it was settled that they were actually to be married at the New Year. Molly watched him saying 'good-bye' to them in the porch. He kissed Miss Juliana again and again. 'I'll be here on Christmas Day, my darling, dead or alive,' he said. Then he shook the Vicar's hand: 'Good-bye, father-in-law; I'll keep my word. My sea-chest shall come back full of golden guineas; you shall count them yourself.' He ran back for one more kiss of his sweetheart, then away he sailed.

"You're getting sleepy I see, but Vol. 3 is a very short one.

"He *did* come back. He *did* bring home the big sea-chest full of gold, but he never saw poor Miss Juliana again. She died of fever after a short illness, and was buried in the Vicarage vault under the chancel. I can show you the very place.

"Christmas Day came and went, and Molly was abed and asleep, when a knocking at the door roused her. Peeping over the landing-rail into the hall, she could see the Vicar admitting a tall figure wrapped in a great cloak, under which she could spy a sword and a gold-trimmed cuff. He went into the Vicar's study, and they talked long together. Outside in the garden Molly could see six sailors standing round something like a great chest covered with a tarpaulin. Presently the Vicar and his visitor came out, both apparently overwhelmed with grief. Some order was given to the sailors who took up the chest and all the party disappeared in the direction of the church. Molly dressed as fast as she could and ran out after them, following the track of their footsteps in the snow. She came

upon one of the men standing on the look-out at the churchyard gate, and dived behind a snow-covered bush to wait events. After a long time a soft whistle was given, and Molly heard the crackle of the man's footsteps on the snow. She crept out and saw the whole party turning the far corner of the church, taking the short-cut to the sea. She scrambled on the churchyard wall to look after them, and saw distinctly that they had *not* the chest with them. Then the Vicar came upon her suddenly and she fled home. The ship sailed in the night and was never seen in St. Barr's again."

"Is that the end?"

"That is all the end Molly Kimber ever knew."

"What became of the Vicar?"

"He started for Starmouth next morning, taking the key of the vault with him. Ike Guest's old boat was found bottom upwards on the beach some time after, but none of those who started in her were ever seen again. Molly sickened for the fever next day, and was raving with delirium for many days. Her mother hurried her away from St. Barr's as soon as she got better. The fever ravaged the place like a pestilence, and years after, when Molly went back there, she found all her old friends and relations dead and gone—even Miss Juliana's name and story clean forgotten. Nor could she discover whether any more was ever heard of Captain Lee and his sea-chest."

"Why, of course he came back one moonshiny night and carried it off, or his men did?"

"Do you think so? Well, I don't. I think the chances are that Captain Lee sailed for the Spanish Main or wherever his Tom Tiddler's ground might be. I dare say he picked up enough gold and silver to fill another sea-chest before he died."

"Suppose Molly invented the whole story of Dick Lee's return to satisfy the cravings of your infant imagination? Or more likely—dreamt it in the fever?"

"What an unbeliever you are! Well, I'll give you another bit of evidence that she did neither. Molly's stepfather sent her all that belonged to her when her mother died. Amongst them was a queer sort of broken box or case that she gave me. It knocked about in the nursery toy-cupboard for years till I reclaimed it. I often thought of showing it to some dealer in curios, but never did till last month. He offered me ten pounds down for it. It was a reliquary of gold and enamel—old Italian work—once set with precious stones."

"What do you say to that? Why shouldn't those candlesticks have been silver-gilt or gold—and the bowls and flagons, eh? They have all disappeared, but it is borne in upon me that if Dick Lee's treasure ever came here it is here still."

"Let us grant the possibility—and then?"

"Then I want you to help me to find it. It mayn't be all coin. There may be gold and silver plate, precious stones, perhaps more

church plunder—" and this respectable London citizen actually smacked his lips at the thought—"anyhow, something worth the search is to be found here. Now, what do you say?"

"I'd like a few more details of your plan for getting away with it first."

"That's simple. I'm here in the character of a mining expert sent by the Lord of the manor—whoever he may be—to prospect for copper."

"Copper! In these cliffs?"

"Copper, or lead, or water, or what you please. St. Barr's is not geological. I knock about with a sack and a hammer, splitting stones, and talk valiantly about ores and veins and the money made in mines. The boys followed me about a bit at first, but the novelty has worn off me now. I showed them some chemical experiments, and sent off a heavy chest of specimens by the carrier last Tuesday. There will be nothing singular in my asking you to take charge of another load as far as London—in fact you might come back and fetch away a second instalment if needful—you remember it took six sailors to carry the chest. What are you hesitating about? Don't you think I'll make it worth your while? I'll settle about your extra leave, and you shall have a fair percentage on the find. Can't you trust me?"

"Absolutely. But I don't want a percentage—"

"Halves, I suppose? You have me at your mercy." He looked at me more in sorrow than in anger.

"I don't want a sixpence of your treasure. Wilkinson has gone to the Liverpool office has he not?"

"What then?"

"That leaves a vacancy—"

"You won't lose anything for want of asking! Do you expect me to recommend you for Wilkinson's berth?" He surveyed me up and down. "Why not?" I heard him ask himself at last; then aloud: "I think I can promise it you. Anything else?"

"That you'll get what you want me to help in, done to-night. I must get off early to-morrow."

"That means you don't quite trust me. All right."

Of course he says now that he had his eye on me from the first, and should have offered me Wilkinson's post in any case. If so, as events turned out, I'm delighted to hear it. We shook hands on the bargain and a long talk over preliminaries followed. We had a stiff job before us, he warned me, but time enough to get through it before the boats returned. I raked out my fire and extinguished the candle, locked both doors of my room and sallied forth with him. We sneaked from shadow to shadow till we passed the last cottage, skirted some untidy little enclosures, and gained a crazy old building standing within a stone's-throw of the church smothered in overgrown shrubbery. This was the old Vicarage where he lodged with a certain deaf old Mrs. Guest, grandmother to half the parish.

He left me to fetch some needful articles from the house, and then

guided me in the darkness to what I made out to be a short avenue with stunted elms arching their boughs overhead. "Juliana's walk," he murmured with a touch of sentiment, handing me a bundle to carry.

It ended in the gate into the churchyard described in Molly's story.

The side of the church appeared a mere heap of ruins; one of the chancel walls had fallen, Goring explained, and it had cost him an infinity of trouble to discover under the débris the exact site of the vicar's family vault. Luckily the stones had so fallen as to screen but not block the entrance to the vault, which was further masked by a self-sown elder bush. Under cover of its salt-bitten leaves he had been at work clearing the passage, so that there was just space for the two of us to stand in.

We scrambled down into it with our bundles, out of one of which Goring proceeded to extract a dark lantern and light it. It threw an uncomfortable burglarious light on our operations, especially when sundry unfamiliar, wicked-looking tools came out of the same sack. However they were not needed just yet. Goring produced a bright new key from his pocket and fitted it carefully to the lock. It was well-oiled, and after one or two trials turned easily.

"That's all right. I took an impression in wax of the wards and posted it up to London," said my unblushing accomplice. "Now shove." We did shove, but the door, warped and swollen with damp, stuck fast till a little instrument was applied which opened it as easily as cracking a nut. Even then, the ground having risen inside, there was only room to screw in sideways.

The air was fresh inside, charged with nothing worse than a smell of mould and general decay. Goring held up the light, and I made out a spacious vault containing more coffins than I could count lying round on stone shelves. Rotting wood, tarnished metal plates and handles, cloth coverings fretted away by moth or time into flapping black rags which stirred softly in the draught—nothing more; yet before I had completed my survey the attractions of Wilkinson's desk began to fade out of view, and I wished sincerely I had left the opening for some other deserving junior.

Behind the door on the left side the coffins were piled high and close—the vicar's ancestors had been the great folks of St. Barr's—to the right, close to the entrance, they lay farther apart. Goring carried the lantern round trying to decipher names or dates on the plates, casting the light into every empty space. A coffin—the one last placed there—lay at our feet. It was covered with a mouldering mass that might have been flowers and rags of drapery once white, now green and dull as seaweed. It stood on the vault floor further forward than the others.

"Juliana Matilda. Aged twenty-one," he read rubbing the blackened plate with his coarse sleeve. I looked round hoping that

here our quest ended. Coffins, coffins everywhere, but no sign of a chest or anything resembling one could I see. "By Jove, Heritage! Look! It's *here*!" Goring cried, throwing himself on the coffin.

I looked, and for the first time began honestly to believe in the skipper's treasure.

The coffin stood out farther into the vault than the others, because in the space beyond it, stood something—not another coffin, but a rough wooden case with a rope round it.

We didn't speak another word, but set to work like maniacs; first, dragging poor Miss Juliana out and to one side, and then trying all we knew to drag the sea-chest—for that it most assuredly was—from the recess. The stout tarred rope held for a time, and the box ground and grated forward over the rough flagstones for a few inches, then the rope suddenly gave, and Goring rolled backwards capsizing the lantern.

What an hour it seemed before he could pick himself up and find the matches! I'm not a nervous man, but I declare while that light was re-kindling I felt queer, as I thought of all the dead folk round me. I had stumbled up against a coffin—suppose, only suppose a bony hand should clutch my ankle—ugh! how creepy about the legs the very idea made me—and what *was* that cold on my cheek? Every vampire, graveyard bogey, resurrectionist horror that I had ever heard in all my life, started up in my mind while that wretched wick was a-kindling.

At last we got to work again, and after various attempts got a sound rope round the chest, and hauled it forth clear of the shelf. A stout box, soundly made, very long in proportion to its width, bound many times round with rope which had at one time been sealed at the knots.

There was some black lettering upon it. "'R,'" Goring read excitedly, "'I,' 'C.'"

"Here's 'Lee'!" I interrupted him.

"And what's this?—'K-e-s,' 'Kestril'!—the name of the ship, I suppose——"

"And a date——"

"Don't let's waste time. Lend a hand."

He passed a small steel crowbar to me, and we attacked the lid together. The wood was stout, the long rusty nails held firm. The perspiration streamed from our faces as we worked against time, terrified at the sound of our own movements. The lid gave at last, and up it came groaning and straining, tearing itself, splintering away from the remaining nails. Inside was a tarpaulin. Goring's sharp knife ripped it from end to end and discovered yet another cover beneath, this time of stout canvas.

"What's this?" we asked one another, as that being ripped disclosed a mass of fine shavings, or dried leaves, possibly, giving out a strong aromatic scent. Goring plunged his hand down into

them for some inches. "There's something of metal here, but I can't get it up."

I had pushed my fingers down the side of the box as far as they would go and caught at the edge of some linen stuff. I jerked it up and the shavings flew out in a cloud, blinding our eyes and setting me sneezing violently.

When I had wiped my streaming eyes I beheld Goring, with a face of horror, lifting his lantern and gazing with wild eyes into the chest. There lay before us—in his habit as he lived, cocked hat and sword by his side—Captain Richard Lee himself, preserved by some process of embalming that had turned his skin into the semblance of wrinkled parchment. His black beard and fierce moustache had a lifelike curl. His pistols were in his belt, his hands crossed on his breast. Under one hand was a folded paper, which I softly drew away. That was all we took. The belt clasp might have been of gold, and the pistols were silver mounted and curiously wrought: a diamond sparkled amongst the folds of yellow cambric round his neck, and a great emerald on his finger, but we never touched them. The stern calm face of the dead skipper held us at bay. We drew the sheet over him again, swept together the shavings as we could, and scattered them over him, and fastened up his coverings once more, feeling the while—at least I did—as if we had committed a murder and were burying the corpse.

Then when all was done we sat down on him and by the lantern's light slowly and laboriously made out the following:—

"We, Thomas Macbride first mate, Elijah Thorpe second mate, John Sprott boatswain, and Michael Mullins carpenter, all of the schooner 'Kestrel,' now lying becalmed lat. 5° N.; long. 23° W., do give our solemn promise to our captain, Richard Lee, that we take the ship according to his orders whether he be living or dead without delay to St. Barr's in England, and that if he be dead we will faithfully give the messages that he charges us with to his friends there, and will bury him there in the churchyard, and this we shall do before Christmas Day. This we swear and to this we put our hands."

Then followed the signatures. The first, 'Thomas Macbride,' in a neat educated hand, the next in a rough scrawl, and the other two represented by marks. There was a further note at the bottom.

"Captain Lee died Oct. 15th. I, Thomas Macbride, now in command of the ship, having been bred to the doctor's trade, have taken measures to preserve the body and will deliver it safe according to my promise, and with it the captain's share of treasure—" The rest of the writing on which the dead hand had lain was indecipherable.

"What matter; since it was a lapsed legacy," sighed Goring. He opened his lantern and set a corner of the paper alight. It went up in a flare and he trampled the ashes to dust on the ground. We had no heart to speak more, neither then nor for many a day after, of the vanished chance, but hastened in silence to efface all marks of

disturbance, placed poor Miss Juliana beside her faithful sweetheart, made the door fast behind us, and scrambled back into the chill grey light of early dawn.

"Well, good-bye," said he abruptly, as we came in sight of the "Heart and Hand." "I shan't see you again till we meet in town. Much obliged." He paused, evidently casting about for some appropriate word to form the epitaph of our dead plans. "Of course I'm disgusted—that I don't deny. Not so much at the loss as at the confounded sentimentality of the fellow. Good night!"

AN IDYL OF EARLY SPRING.

BONNY and brisk stand the firs, pointing their brush-blunted fingers,

Still on each spear of the green pendant the mist jewel lingers :
Soft with the blue of the sky, bright with the shine and the
dawning,

Shimmering moon-clouded orbs, luminant tears of the morning.

Shivers a breeze from the south, nodding the spray-laden grasses,
Tender as sigh of a maid, breathes through the coppice and
passes :

Heavily swinging the boughs, shaking the rain-drops together,
Rocking each tremulous globe, loosing its magical tether.

Mellow and brown on the stones, flourish the hair-tufted mosses,
Daintily spearing the dew, flung as the greenery tosses ;
Robin sits snug on a bough, cozy and brown and as mellow,
With the ripe red of his breast shading to sumptuous yellow.

Sings me a song of his own, frank as his heart, and as tender,
Brave with a hint of the spring, glad for the ultimate splendour.
"Courage!" he cries, "with the harsh, halcyon days intermingle,
Buds are aform in the wood, ferns are afresh in the dingle."

"Forward!" he cries, "let the soul, grace inarticulate borrow,
Live by the faith of to-day, grow for the hope of to-morrow."

NINA FRANCES LAYARD.

MONSEIGNEUR.

WE many of us know the Knight of Glorious Deeds which Spenser tells us of in the 'Faery Queen.' I also know a real and veritable Knight of Glorious Deeds who is still engaged following his noble quest. Sometimes I have caught the glitter of his armour through a London fog, and there are many who, besides myself, have spoken to him face to face.

In the olden days, enchanted forests and solitary glades, where gentle ladies were oppressed, and brave men overcome with guile, were his delight. Many a heart, half dead with shame and fear, has revived on seeing his "haughty helmet" shining as he came riding through the solemn aisles of branching trees. But, of late, he frequents the towns as well. Indeed, I understand, there is scarcely a city in the world, and no phase of society, in which he has not been encountered either wrestling with evil, or allaying pain, or comforting sorrow with "faire and feeling words."

He may, invariably, be recognised by the atmosphere of purity which surrounds him—the clear air of the mountain tops on which his spirit dwells. But purity with him is not synonymous with coldness. Its rarity is tempered by a subtle, penetrating kindness, as generous, as cheering as God's sunlight in a favoured land. Through loss of love, he knows the power of love; and loves more truly as the years go by. Lord of himself and his desires, he rules by serving, and bends the proudest will by following its inclination.

"Not his the golden pen nor lip's persuasion,
But a fine sense of right;
And truth's directness meeting each occasion
Straight as a line of light."

I remember very well when first his life touched mine; when he gave me, a lonely, discontented child, the motive power of action for years to come.

I was standing one afternoon, by the cross roads near Newport in the Isle of Wight, waiting for the Ventnor coach. It had been raining: but the sun had broken through the clouds, and the wild-mint in the hedgerows gave out an aromatic perfume. I never perceive the smell of mint now, without recalling the green, wet, shining hawthorns, the overhanging trees, and the tearful beauty of that English April day.

The coach drove up, it was almost filled with portly market-women and their portly baskets. The lady who had come to see me off, was seriously afraid there would be no room found for me; or, if there were a place, I should be overcome with heat if I were not near a

window, and, if indeed I were placed near an open window, was there not danger of my catching cold?

These were questions hard to decide and involving much confusion. In the midst of which, I peeped timidly round my friend, with the curiosity of an unfledged chicken, just as the perplexity was deepest and the clamour loudest, to see if younger eyes could not spy out a nook for my small person. Then, a voice said quickly, but without haste:

"If you will come up here, next me, that will be the best plan. I will look after the open window."

There are voices and voices: and some, without being beautiful, or even sweet, arrest attention and command respect. This one was very gentle, and farther softened by a faint Scotch accent, that sounded like a vague memory of peace. It was also commanding; with the calm authority of those who weigh considerations before expressing an opinion. On looking up to see from whence the voice proceeded, I perceived, at the far end of the coach, a gentleman leaning towards me. He held out his hand with a kind smile, and his grave, understanding eyes seemed to read the secret of my loneliness, and quiet its impatient pain.

With impulsive energy, I leaped on to the step, passed between the portly market-women, and in another instant was at his side.

He smiled again at my eagerness, for which I could not then account—being as a rule shy with strangers—and we speedily became close friends. He had seen me in my solitary rambles through the Landslip; had noticed me in church, he said; and he was not shocked when I confessed I found the service wearisome. His sympathy soon drew me on to own how much I longed to have a friend who would "love me *very* much"—some one "just as old as me, you know, and not even a little bit older," because I had no sister, no brothers near me, and not all the kind caresses of my grown-up relations could supply the void, which often made the brightest day seem dark to me.

He listened patiently, attentively; glancing at me quietly from time to time from under his thoughtful-looking brows; offering no remark until I had no more to tell.

"My child," he then said gently, "you will be always lonely unless you give as much as you wish to receive. That is a rule which holds good, under all circumstances, all through life. I knew a Glasgow merchant once—he is a rich man now—who began life with the capital of two halfpennies and the motto, quaintly spelt, 'He that giveth, geteth!' Acting on this advice, he halved his money with another boy, poorer than himself, and bought matches I believe with his share. He sold them at a profit. The next day he did better, and the next better still. Always working on the principle of giving away half his gains. Little by little he has reached success. He is rich and influential; has a crest on all his spoons and forks and painted on his carriage. But the legend that runs beneath it is the same which made his fortune, and it is in the same quaint, old-fashioned spelling: 'He that giveth, geteth!'"

After a moment's pause he went on :

"It applies to everything in the world : to *everything*. If you give little, whether of money, or time, or affection, you will get little in return. And unless *you* try to love some other lonely little girl, you will always be left alone yourself!"

He looked down on me to see if I had understood. Then, with a quick flash of humour, he changed the subject and carried me, in spirit, with him to the East, making me laugh with tales of personal adventure and strange experience in the Holy Land.

Alas, all too soon we arrived in Ventnor, and the coach stopped before the office in the High Street, where my new friend bade me farewell.

"Remember," he repeated, taking my willing hand in his, "he that giveth, getteth."

I nodded. And the kindest, heartiest smile broke like sunshine over his face. With a gracious salutation, that made me feel quite tall, he wished me every happiness and walked quickly away.

When I got home, I etched the motto on a slip of paper. I have it still, with many a dot and flourish ; and I tried persistently to find those other lonely girls whose joy should give me mine.

Here and there, in the course of many years, in London, Paris, Milan, surrounded by Irish bogs or Italian olives, I again caught distant glimpses of the glorious knight as he fulfilled his task of fighting evil. "Success takes time and work—time and work, and *patience*." Such was the lesson his example always preached, and my impulsive temperament marvelled at his self-restraint. During the summer of 18— our lives touched again in Switzerland.

The beauty of his character had deepened and unfolded since the day he told me stories in the Ventnor coach. I remember being particularly struck by the intense repose of his features and bearing as, one night, he stood in the full moonlight on the terrace outside the hotel. It was one of those still, quiet evenings whose supreme mystery, touching both senses and intellect, retains us motionless in reverent expectation, until the spirit "without voice or utterance," brooding in the shadowy mists that veil the valleys, in the trembling moonlight on the lake, in the solemn hush of the sleeping fields and cornlands, shapes an infinite thought to fit our finite understanding.

He was one with the scene—as quiet as the stately pines beyond him, as passively responsive to the hour's beauty as the shining air. All Nature seemed conscious, and he with Nature, of a pervading presence, whose loveliness, majestic purity, and tenderness was in and round, and of them too. Far in the distance, as if in a more ethereal world where neither sin nor suffering was known, the Alps rose against the sky in grave simplicity. And, as I watched him, it grew upon me ; he was indeed full of rest, a rest springing from the assurance of power more than mortal. Through obedience he had reached the point where men are counted worthy :—

"Calm eyed to face distortion, and to sit
Transparent amidst other forms of youth,
Whose only impulse is towards God and bliss."

Gradually I perceived the appearance was reality, and that the influence he exercised over others proceeded from this alone.

In the hotel he was known as "Monseigneur," and the name suited him. For, though he showed himself a simple, kindly gentleman, unassuming, unpretending, he stood alone, one among many, either greatly loved or greatly feared. Nothing impure or false could bear the shining of his "diamond shield." Yet he was no enemy to fun or laughter. A "seemly mirth" was always pleasant in his sight.

One afternoon there came to our hotel a lady burdened with a crying child. She alighted on the gravelled sweep before the door, in the midst of fine ladies and finer gentlemen gathered there to see the diligence come in; and stood, with a great rent in her muslin gown, surrounded with odd-looking parcels, a Juno among women, with Persephone's eyes and Nerissa's hair, every inch a queen.

Next day she hired a peasant girl as nursemaid to the child, and began forthwith to lead as prettily secluded a life as you could wish to see, asking only to be left in peace to dream the days away.

For she was sorrowful and took delight in gathering up the threads of memory and weaving them into sad remembrances of the past. But there is no honey-pot in summer-time untouched by flies where flies exist. The envy her beauty roused grew stronger in proportion to the praise it was compelled to hear, and soon the "tell-tale-tit" had found a charming piece of scandal to amuse her friends.

How it arose I do not know. Presently, however, a rumour crept abroad that Mrs. Ellice had left home without her husband's consent; it was observed a famous astronomer was paying her by far too marked attention; that she encouraged him disgracefully; that she was a dreadful flirt! These whispers took time in coming round; but they did come round at last, both to the ears of Mrs. Ellice and of Monseigneur. I heard of them first from her, and saw the round tears fall from outraged womanhood, of which the angels kept account.

When the matter came before him, Monseigneur broke through his rule of silence. His calm eyes blazed, flashing contempt, his words scathed like lightning, before whose scorching heat the miserable gossips shrank in dumb dismay.

But though they dared inflict no more, the wounds their idle words had caused were not soon healed.

It might have been the Wednesday following that Mrs. Ellice sat on the terrace with the astronomer and me. Trouble had told upon her; deeper shadows lay under her gentle eyes, and the arched brows above them arched more plaintively than nature had intended; her sweet lips pressed each other till there was no room left for laughter, or trembled in the effort to conceal pain. Evidently perplexity and

doubt had done their worst to scare sleep from her pillow ; and bitterness was doing much the same to spoil her peace of mind.

How still it was ! Soft, white clouds were clinging to the mountains opposite beyond the lake. The *tap, tap, tap* of the woodpecker came to us distinctly through the summer air. The breeze was sighing through the pine tops like a far-off echo of a distant surf. Monseigneur was pacing up and down the lawn, talking to a flock of children, telling them fairy stories probably, keeping them hanging on his words as if their lives depended on the next. And the little creatures loved him ! They clung to his hands and coat-tails unforbidden ; they waltzed round him, and walked backwards before him, and stared into his face with happy wonder, as if they read the secret of his eloquence behind his serious self-control, and knew what a very beautiful secret it was. Presently he came towards us followed by the children, on his way indoors, and as he passed the astronomer stood up and saluted him.

"How respectful," said Mrs. Ellice, approvingly. "I didn't know you possessed the virtue."

He glanced at her in surprise.

"Veneration, certainly, is not a strong point of mine," he said.

"But I hope I can respect a good man when I see him."

Mrs. Ellice smiled wistfully. The astronomer resumed his seat. He glanced at her again doubtfully.

"I suppose I owe Monseigneur as great a debt as it is possible for one human being to owe another," he resumed. "He about saved me from ruin. . . Would you care to hear about it?" he asked, shyly.

Mrs. Ellice would ; so would I. The astronomer asked permission to smoke a cigar ; and, having received it, lighted one and commenced :

"A long time ago, when I was very young and green, I was at Nice taking observations—my first appointment of any importance. I had with me a large sum of money to defray all necessary expenses, for which, of course, I was accountable. My position altogether was one of tolerable responsibility for so young a man. I was proud of it, and of myself, and worked hard for several months to gain credit. I did not see much of the people with me in the hotel. Indeed, with the exception of Monseigneur and a Russian baron, they were not an interesting set. Monseigneur was very ill. I saw more of the Russian, who was a very fascinating companion. He had an immense fund of information, miscellaneous, accurate so far as it went, and would propound original hypotheses, sometimes, which we would discuss and argue about of an evening in his room or in mine. I am convinced he would have made no small name for himself in the scientific world, if he had not been hampered with too much money, and if he had not been an inveterate gambler. Monte Carlo, Monte Carlo ; sooner or later, our conversation turned always on that *Paradiso*

d'Inferno. I used to wonder at the fascination the very name possessed for him. He often pressed me to go with him, but my work kept me at Nice. I had not time to make excursions even of a more innocent character."

He hesitated a moment ; then continued more slowly :

"I ought to tell you, perhaps, that my mother, and also a younger brother, were dependent on me for support. So, you see, there were many reasons, beside my own ambition, why I should avoid the tables. Nor at first had I any temptation to frequent them. My contempt for all slaves of passion was very great. The accounts of suicide, recurring through the season, only awoke in me profound disgust. But, one day, I received bad news from home. Money was needed at once, to avoid serious disgrace. I had only a few napoleons in my purse, with the exception of the gold in my charge, which it would be robbery to touch ; I could not command a farthing more. I was at my wits' end. I racked my brains to no purpose, and grew more miserable every moment. Ruin stared me in the face either way : if I took what did not belong to me, or if I failed to meet a certain demand within a given time. Monseigneur sat opposite me at *table d'hôte* ; the baron next me. As luck would have it, the latter returned that evening from Monte Carlo, the winner of several thousand francs. He was going back next day, he said, to break the bank ; and, tapping my shoulders gaily, he added :

"Don't you envy me, my boy ? Wouldn't you like to have a little of the *chink, chink, chink* ?"

He prided himself on his English slang.

"I would," I answered, shortly. "I've half a mind to go with you to-morrow."

"Don't have half a mind," said the baron. "Never do things by halves. Have a whole one. Come with me, and make your fortune."

The colour rose darkly to our friend's forehead as he proceeded :

"Think of me as badly as you will," he said, with an effort ; "I went ; taking with me five hundred francs of the money I had in trust ; intending to replace it immediately on my return. For my mother's sake, I told myself, I went ; and lost every sou !"

We were silent. A tear fell into Mrs. Ellice's lap.

"I was nearly out of my mind," he went on, hurriedly. "When we came back, I drank a good deal of wine at dinner, and hated Monseigneur, who, I fancied, knew all about my folly from beginning to end. He knew me at home, you see. I hated him cordially ; all the more because I had resolved to retrieve my luck next day, and persuaded myself he knew my plan. Perhaps he did.

"I stayed late in the Russian's room that night, to keep myself from thinking. It was past midnight when I went to my own. But what my astonishment and disgust was, you may guess, when I found Monseigneur awaiting me there. He was weak and weary, he had

to steady himself by the chair from which he courteously arose, as he entered, to apologise for his presence at that late hour—which he did with that rare grace of his.

"What did he say? I can't tell you exactly. I know I behaved badly—did not even ask him to be seated. I stormed at him when he explained his object in coming; and he listened patiently. When I had finished my tirade, he began to speak again quietly, even humbly; but with the power of compelling attention he exercises at will. He told me he was afraid I was deeply in trouble, and that I was about to try retrieving my fortune at Monte Carlo—he begged pardon if he were mistaken—perhaps I had already lost more than I could well afford. He pointed out the inevitable result of such a course; he pleaded with me for my mother's sake, holding up before me the ruin awaiting me if I yielded to temptation. He can be marvellously eloquent at times. He would have succeeded sooner if... if I had not taken the money.

"If I don't go, I am ruined!" I confessed, at last.

"He drew the truth from me then. And then he said, with infinite tenderness: 'Poor boy!' That was all. It upset me. I cried like a child.

"You want to know what he did? He persuaded me to leave Nice—my work was finished—and return to England by the mid-day mail. 'We must avoid all *occasion* to sin!' he said. Out of his own pocket he replaced the money I had stolen. More, he wrote a letter which relieved me, to a great degree, of the trouble threatening me. And, he lent me enough to pay my journey home. Then—well—then, he went back to his own apartment to suffer at death's door, from the effects of the excitement and over-fatigue which my rescue involved. Respect him? I should, seeing he saved me, humanly speaking, from dishonour in this world, and ruin in the next!"

"I wish he could save me!" said Mrs. Ellice.

The astronomer got up and turned away his head.

"If I were in any difficulty," he said, in the sullen tone a man's voice takes when he is strongly moved, there is no one whose advice I would sooner ask, or follow, than Monseigneur's."

She made no answer; her hands worked nervously. Presently, she too rose; and we watched her stately figure slowly moving down the terrace, across the lawn, and disappearing into the wood beyond.

"She is in great trouble," said I.

"Her husband is a brute!" returned the astronomer shortly. "And she is next door to an angel. Did you ever hear her complain? No; she never would. But I know of her sorrow from my wife."

So did I from observation.

Monseigneur was going away. Monseigneur was going on Friday morning. Mrs. Ellice's perplexity deepened. All Thursday she was seen pacing the terrace, or the paths under the pines, as restlessly as

a restless spirit. She seemed unable to be still a moment. Twice, she approached my rocking-chair, and looked down into my face appealingly. Once, her lips parted as if to make a request ; but she turned away without preferring it, and recommenced her weary wandering. About four in the afternoon, Monseigneur went down the drive in a hurry. He was going to the village. He met Mrs. Ellice in one of her aimless peregrinations, and something in her expression must have struck him ; for he hesitated, and, paused inquiringly before her. Then the two walked slowly on together.

I breathed a sigh of relief.

The astronomer came strolling by with his alpenstock ; he wanted to know if I would join a party to climb one of the higher peaks—said party to start at four A.M. I thanked him. Mrs. Ellice and Monseigneur appeared in the distance, and disappeared round a bend in the road.

"That's all right !" remarked the astronomer, contentedly. "I told him last night she wanted looking after."

"I should like to know," said I, "the secret of his influence.. What is it ? It is uncanny !"

A curious smile curled my friend's moustaches upward. He leaned on his alpenstock and replied slowly :

"Simply that he tries to follow in the footsteps of his divine Master. We need seek no further for a reason, I think."

* * * * *

Next day we assembled in the hall to see Monseigneur depart. Not a few hearts were aching, knowing we should "see his face no more." He came down the stairs with the astronomer ; returning the salutations and good wishes poured upon him with his peculiar courtesy and grace. Mrs. Ellice was standing near me, her restlessness gone. He stopped before her in silence, and held out his hand. She gave him hers, and they two looked at one another gravely and steadily.

"When do you start ?" he said at length.

"This afternoon," she answered.

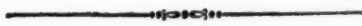
And again, that strange smile of loving approbation which had shone on me in childhood, lighted up his calm, commanding eyes, seeming to fall on her in blessing. He turned away ; and a minute later, the roll of carriage-wheels announced that the Knight of Glorious Deeds had departed to pursue his quest elsewhere.

"Where are you going, after this ?" I asked Mrs. Ellice.

"Home," she answered. "To my husband."

And with her queenly head erect, and her little hands pressed close together, she, too, passed out of my sight.

ELWYN KEITH.



LAST WORDS.

Now thou art here! the angel of my life,
 The one dear voice from heaven,
 That cheered my soul through all my hours of strife,
 When hope, and joy, and light were all but riven
 From me. My more than friend,
 My love through all the years love has made dear!
 Wait with me till the end!

I've waked from wondrous dreams; and yet, 'tis well,
 For thou than sweetest dream
 Art better far. And I would ever dwell
 Within the glory of the tender gleam
 Of those bright eyes which lend
 Heaven's light to earth; and yet it cannot be!—
 Wait with me till the end!

Oh, let thine eyes, my love's first, only dream,
 Look kindly on me now,
 And give their blessing, falling like a gleam
 Of heaven upon a death-o'ershadowed brow;
 A blessing that shall lend
 A glory that shall light me through the gloom!
 Wait with me till the end!

Thy presence lent a beauty to the flower,
 A sweetness to the dove,
 A charm to all the sounds of twilight's hour;
 And I had all thy heart's impassioned love!
 But now my soul must rend
 Itself from thee, and go its lonely way!
 Wait with me till the end!

I left thee on that day now long gone by,
 And, while I strove for fame,
 My soul fed on the love in thy fond eye,
 And burned that I might gain a noble name,
 And that we yet might blend
 Our lives in one renown; but all is o'er!
 Wait with me till the end!

Dear love! I feel thy kiss upon my brow!
 Weep not, my love and life!
 We'll soon together be; be near me now,
 While I am passing through this mortal strife!
 No other hand can tend
 Me like thine own, in this, my hour of need!
 Wait with me till the end!

ALEXANDER LAMONT.

THE STATE OF NEW YORK
IN SENATE
JANUARY 1, 1901.



HE TOUCHED HER FINGERS WITH HIS LIPS AS RESPECTFULLY AS IF SHE
HAD BEEN A PRINCESS.

